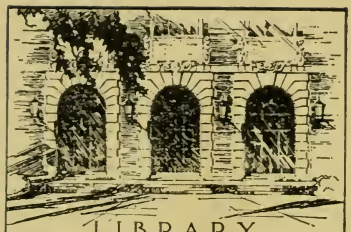

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MISS BEAUCHAMP:

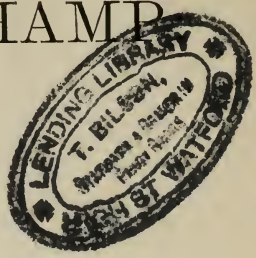
A PHILISTINE.

VOL. III.

Constance E. MacEwen.
Jan. 28. 93.

MISS BEAUCHAMP

A PHILISTINE.



BY

CONSTANCE MacEWEN,

AUTHOR OF

"GIN A BODY MEET A BODY," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. III.

"Such a Lord is Love."

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL
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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	FINESSE	1
II.	THE POPPIES	21
III.	FROM THAT MOMENT	29
IV.	AGGRESSIVE LANDLORDS	42
V.	A SHEFFIELD LADY	54
VI.	ON THE FLOW	67
VII.	FICTION BECOMES FACT	80
VIII.	WHAT WORLD IS THIS?	88
IX.	GOLDEN MOMENTS	93
X.	DIEGO'S LOVES	99
XI.	SUBTLETY	108
XII.	EGYPT	125
XIII.	THE "SERAPIS"	137
XIV.	A WHISPER'S FRUIT	155

CHAP.		PAGE
XV.	WANDERINGS	165
XVI.	REALIZATION	172
XVII.	SHALL I?	179
XVIII.	MRS. BATTLE'S DISCRIMINATION	187
XIX.	COUNSEL	198
XX.	WHAT NOW?	207
XXI.	INFANT VOICES	216
XXII.	THE DUCA DI CANTILUPE	234

VOLUME III.

"We came to the silent Isle that we
Never had touch'd at before,
Where a silent ocean always broke
On a silent shore."

MISS BEAUCHAMP:

A PHILISTINE.

CHAPTER I.

FINESSE.

"It is easy to sugar to be sweet, and to nitre to be salt."
"A sound apple produces seed; a hybrid does not."

Diana and Mrs. Battle were in town. There were yet a few colourless leaves on the trees in the Parks, and but few people had returned. Mr. Cantilupe had inaugurated a series of recitations at a dull time; but he had motives. Almost every afternoon he was to be found in the drawing-room at M—— Street; but never a word of love, or a hint of love, since

that interview at Beauchamp, had passed his lips. Had he not embraced time ?

Diana grew accustomed to his presence, and so long as his conversation ran on intellectual lines, it was as pleasant as studying Greek Art.

Mrs. Battle's lips had taken a depressed turn ; the drooping corners were expressive of some inward annoyance. She spent many Saturday afternoons at the "Zoo," studying serpents ; and, shaking her head, "Symbols of sin" was her refrain. Mrs. Battle never informed Diana of these visits to the "Zoo." She had grown more reticent with regard to Mr. Cantilupe, and the expression of her opinion concerning him ; but none the less watchful.

"He won't put me easily off my guard," was her constant thought. "That he has designs on Miss Beauchamp, as surely as the serpent had designs on Eve, I, Martha Battle, would lay

my head on a stock to endorse; but whether those designs be love or hate, I don't pretend (not being endowed with supernatural discernment) to affirm; but designs are none the less designs for not parading themselves in black or scarlet.

"All this Art-talk and Greek-worship, what's at the bottom of it? I'm tired to death of Homer. If I'm old-fashioned, I'm sure so is he; and making such a fuss over a heathen too! I suppose Sir Blaise Panmure himself won't get into the Church without having some parley with him. I know Greek and Latin and theology all dovetail. Wait till Sir Blaise comes to town; we shall see who will have the best of it then. I wish Miss Beauchamp would be warned; but, there—there."

Entering the drawing-room one Saturday afternoon after her periodical visit to the Zoo, she found Mr. Cantilupe murmuring of "Jupiter

of Elis." As he was in the middle of his story, she sat down without a word.

"Phidias," he had commenced (and here he bowed to Mrs. Battle, who returned the bow —with her best nod; she never could bow; never had learned to dance and bow and glide —*never*), "when he projected his 'Jupiter of Elis,' found no grouping of thought—found only chaos. He endeavoured to bring order out of chaos. He paced the streets restlessly; he wandered up and down his room; but no help came. Wonderful visions were there, but all so confused and involved, that they could not spring forth clear and fair.

"One night he lay tossing on his couch, struggling to arrange his thoughts, when he fell asleep and dreamed; and this is what he dreamt—Groups of Grecian maids approached him, and on their shapely heads (which have

been the model of every artist and sculptor) they carried pails of water, and as they walked they sang a song of praise to Jupiter. Then a wonderful lightness and brilliancy, like the herald of dawn, flowed into the soul of Phidias, for the sun of poetry had looked upon him; and the image he had chased in his waking dreams, and in his sleeping thoughts, came forth, and took its perfect form.

"It is ever thus with genius. Proteus finds his own in this fashion. Think you Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, had not their visions in this fashion also? Talent may sit with its quill pen in its hand, and with eyes fixed on the MS. before it. It may so sit for years, clipping and pruning and turning its fine phrases; but genius labours till Proteus brings the winged form to its side, and crystallizes it into symmetry; and then Shake-

speare thunders and pipes, till he draws a world to listen; then Dante paints his 'Inferno,' and Homer sings his 'Iliad': 'tis thus Proteus bestows his inspirations.

"Miss Beauchamp, Proteus has not passed you by. Your creations have yet to come, but in your delineations of the creations of others I declare the 'sun of poetry' has looked upon you.

"Do you know," he continued, "that I am about to build a house? I can leave it to the nation when I die. A childless, relationless man must needs find something colossal to adopt; in the very grandeur of his adoption he *may* find some consolation." Mr. Cantilupe's eyes were sedulously fixed on Mrs. Battle's rounded cheek, which was turned, with some assumed unintelligence, towards the window.

"Every detail," he added, "of the house

will partake of the spirit of the so-called Pagans. Beneath the myths and fables of those bygone days, I shall enter more and more into the spirit of the fine arts."

"I am peculiarly delighted with the Renaissance school of thought," said Diana. "Their grotesque and weird effects fill one with laughter. It's good to laugh; and the exuberant imagination of the Renaissance period relieves the tension that one feels, as one is lost in the sublimity of those perfect creations of the ancient Greeks."

"Let me tell you how the Renaissance period came about," said Mr. Cantilupe. "The gods were holding high converse one day. They had conceived the idea of throwing off their divine garments, and coming down to wander among the tragedies and comedies of mankind. The idea met with unanimous approval. They descended to earth.

"Now, in invisible form, they entered the studios of painters and sculptors, and filled them with strange fantasies. Visible life came before them in a new and fantastic form; for all visible life had gathered in invisible form, to do homage to the gods as they walked upon our earth. Grasshoppers curtsied by the side of fine dames, and toads croaked of love and homage. Seals rose up from the unfathomable depths, and walked on *terra firma*, with plaintive, upturned eyes. The period was one of mingled humour and pathos; and the artists and sculptors, filled with a very frenzy of delineation, covered the walls and ceilings, the doors and chimney-pieces, with the extraordinary images that the gods, in their mingled amusement and sorrow for the strange earth that they were treading, had put into their minds. Well, Miss Beauchamp, shall I fit my house up in the Renaissance period?"

"By all means," said Diana; "and in the midst of these incongruities paint a full-length portrait of a 'Sage.' Here you will have a perfect picture of life; for is not real life full of incongruities—everything so mixed and so blended, that, whether you will or not, you can but look out upon it as a huge curiosity shop — full of value and rubbish?"

"Excuse me, Miss Beuchamp," said Mrs. Battle. "I know I'm *not* clever; but, all the same, I know the dust-cart makes use of all rubbish."

"Mrs. Battle, for all I know, you are the sage whose portrait should be painted in the middle of the Renaissance grotesqueries. You have your common-sense well unadulterated; in fine, you might be the instructress of a million sages!"

"Mrs. Battle has the manners of 'Loo,'"

said Mr. Cantilupe. "She makes the stupid intelligent. I quite forgot, in listening to Miss Beauchamp, that there was such a thing as rubbish, or such a receptacle as a dust-cart. 'Tis thus with all imaginative talkers; they set a light to other people's imaginations, and immediately we feel bounding onwards, through the never-ending infinities. We are set free by the enchanting touch; before, we were spell-bound. There is no problem we would not make a dash to unravel; no mathematical calculation we feel we could not at a bound scale. Catch the spirit of your narrator, and you are immediately fused into one."

Mrs. Battle pursed up her lips, and looked down. *This* was a species of matrimony.

"Did you ever read Plato's 'Republic,' Mrs. Battle?" said Mr. Cantilupe.

"Platonics, Mr. Cantilupe, I have heard of, and platonics I disapprove of most thoroughly,

completely, and determinately. I have *never* entered into one of those friendships myself; and I have, on my own and late husband's authority, given in my veto on such intimacies. I believe Plato wore a round cloak with a double hood. I have seen him so garbed in a picture. His platonics, with regard to the sexes (for I've always heard of his platonics in relation to this question), are so hooded. According to these maxims and views I have founded my walk in life, Mr. Cantilupe."

For once Mr. Cantilupe laughed. This narrowing of the sublime theories of Plato down to those narrow limits was enough to produce some faint reflection of the passion of laughter, which can only be procured by the glaring, and the impression of something exaggerated, either in speech or appearance.

"Your very language is tempered with

Plato," said he. "Even Miss Austin, whose works I often see in your hands, did not project her 'Emma' without his aid. He is the universal man, from whom poets, orators, authors, statesmen, get their style in some measure. Miss Beauchamp is a disciple of his."

"I like his vast mind," said Diana meditatively. "I reverence him; because you could not say, Here comes *this* or *that.* He gathered a ray from every philosophy and every school to himself; so Plato never turns a frozen exterior on you."

"I'm glad genius is rare," said Mrs. Battle. "Life, as far as I can see, abounds in pots, pans, and kettles, and the makers of them. You *can* do without your genius, but you *can't* do without your breakfast."

Mrs. Battle's remark was addressed to Mr. Cantilupe, for Diana had left the room.

Sometimes we have to wait long for some desired moment to fall in our way. We have to sit midway in our scheme or plot, waiting for the circumstance we need. Napoleon called himself the "creature of circumstances."

Not so Mr. Cantilupe; he considered himself, in some measure, the artist who had embroidered his own circumstances; he had not looked to any supernatural aid, though he belonged to the Romish Church. Collectively speaking, he believed in that Church, because it traded on the imagination—because it allured you with its jewelled altars, and overpowered you with its constantly ascending incense. Colder forms of worship seemed impossible to him, and then—absolution. Mr. Cantilupe had an eye forward always. Father Marone knew much; he might know more some day; and the altar to "Our Lady," in the marvellous Church of the Annunciation, might flash

a few more gems before her crowds of worshippers.

Mr. Cantilupe had for long desired to have a few minutes' conversation alone with Mrs. Battle. Not that he wanted to know anything further with regard to Miss Beauchamp and Sir Blaise; he perfectly understood the relationship that existed between them. Armed with his own divining powers, and Diego's certain utterances, he was independent of further revelations; but he desired to bewilder Mrs. Battle as to his own interest in Miss Beauchamp. If once he could silence her suspicions, it would be all the better for the part he had to perform; and surely a Saxon dame without imagination, and guided by little more than a dim instinct encased in some outward wrappings of shrewd common-sense, was to be blinded by a little judicious dust-throwing, or mystified, at any rate.

"Miss Beauchamp exerts herself unstintingly," he commenced; "sometimes I fear periods of mental exhaustion must accrue. Not that I have ever witnessed such signs, but sometimes I apprehend them."

Mrs. Battle glanced suspiciously at Mr. Cantilupe. "What form of platonism was this?"

As they sat there, facing each other, they reminded one of the homely fable of the spider and the fly. Be sure, the spider will get the best of it; though, if you have ever watched a real encounter between these two opposing forces, you might perhaps doubt it—the spider seems so blind, the fly so careful. Ugh! what a sudden bound the spider has made, as he lets himself down his tight rope! What a death-clasp about the fly! Life is ugly enough, even among the spiders and flies.

"In two years, Miss Beauchamp informs me, her project will be accomplished," said Mrs.

Battle with some dignity. "I believe she considers herself much indebted to you, Mr. Cantilupe; and gratitude is one of Miss Beauchamp's many virtues."

"None are more conscious of Miss Beauchamp's graces than myself—no one more zealous for her interest and comfort. I think I have proved it."

Mr. Cantilupe paused, and Mrs. Battle looked down and interlaced her hands.

If Eve had paused when the serpent stood beside her, with beguiling voice, would she have eaten the accursed apple which brought us knowledge, and, with knowledge, death? What did this subtle man want to "draw" from Mrs. Battle?

"Men are supposed to be practical," he continued, "and in comparison with women they are so. Women are supposed to be romantic, and in comparison with men they

are so. Doubtless, living, as you do, in the constant presence of so beautiful and gifted a girl as Miss Beauchamp, you find the materials to hand out of which to construct a story more thrilling than the loves of Eloïse and Abelard.

"You, indeed, need not go far from Beauchamp to find your Abelard. Is not Sir Blaise Panmure a man to fit the mood of most women? The Panmures have been famed for their beauty and their wealth. Some women are slaves to this sort of worship. They cannot love unless they can cry out, 'Here comes my hero!' What majesty of mien! what proud grace! Surely, these are the men who tread the earth by right. If such an one beckons, they follow; they are caught by the spell of physical beauty; and if there is added on to this other and higher forms of attraction, the case from the outset is hopeless."

Mrs. Battle continued silent. Regarding his immovable listener attentively, Mr. Cantilupe said slowly—

"I think this marriage, which you have doubtless *romantically* projected, and I have *practically* considered, will be the likely termination of Miss Beauchamp's brilliant success; for a Lady Panmure could hardly lend herself to dramatic impersonations as a professional, even if Sir Blaise, with an invisible mitre probably awaiting him, could approve such exhibition."

Was Mr. Cantilupe sneering? Mrs. Battle was too taken aback to think even; his words were penetrating brain and mind; she would meditate over it all by-and-by; meantime, enough to listen. Some people can absorb the material which is being proffered through the medium of another's language, and use it, and turn it out in shape and form as rapidly

as a machine makes a fabric, and knits it into folds, ready to be displayed in glass windows. Others absorb slowly, and brood over their valuable information long before it takes any symmetry.

"Sir Blaise is a large landed proprietor in Ireland, as well as here," continued Mr. Cantilupe. "As Lady Panmure, what benefits on those unhappy peasants Miss Beauchamp might bestow! Well, Mrs. Battle, we are in sympathy, I feel sure, in our desire for Miss Beauchamp's welfare; and if I have lost a practical view of matters in a romantic hope, I am sure you are equally foolish."

"*Foolish!*" cried Mrs. Battle, flaming up. "I see nothing foolish in a more than likely ending (if marriage is the end) of affairs. Miss Beauchamp, if Sir Blaise had his way, would be Lady Panmure now, I know. Nevertheless, if she thinks fit to keep him in abeyance

till she can meet him on equal grounds, she knows best." Mrs. Battle was panting, as well she might; she was tight in the spider's embrace.

"Just so," he said slowly. "Two years will only make a strong love stronger; she will have seasoned her knight—eh, Mrs. Battle?"

But Mrs. Battle was ready to cry. *What* had she said? *What* had she done? Had she committed herself, or Miss Beauchamp, or Sir Blaise? Alack! alack! What could a daughter of Eve do, when a serpent came and whispered at her ear?

"We are in sympathy, Mrs. Battle," said Mr. Cantilupe again.

"I don't believe in sympathy so much as in antipathy," said Mrs. Battle. "I know there is something in antipathy." Then she waited for a moment and balanced her next

remark as best she could, turning it over both sides. "I have no authority for saying what I have said about Miss Beauchamp and Sir Blaise Panmure. Miss Beauchamp has no confidantes."

"We are a romantic pair, Mrs. Battle," said Mr. Cantilupe; "and, like all romantic people, we breathe *such* life into our little romances that we look upon them as matured facts at last. We have had a pleasant little talk, purely platonic; and now, good-bye."

Mrs. Battle had a tossing night, but she was not projecting a "Jupiter of Elis," neither was she a Phidias; therefore she did not receive anything in return for such restless tossings, except a headache, which she denominated "splitting" the following morning.

CHAPTER II.

THE POPPIES.

"We are tendencies, or rather symptoms. . . . We touch, and go, and sip the foam of many lives."

Six months had passed, and Sir Blaise had seen nothing of Diana. He had remained at Oxford without once coming down, promising himself future rewards, when from his curacy in the grimy East End he entered the earthly paradise of her presence; nevertheless, baskets of costly fruits and groupings of rare flowers came regularly from Whitefriars to M—— Street.

Mr. Cantilupe was great on botany, and his marvellous gift of language easily flowed into

picturesque channels, when describing the different attributes of the rare specimens for which Whitefriars was famous. He never seemed conscious of the donor; and though sometimes, when he caught Diana arranging them in groupings which struck one as a further revelation in the mystic blendings of colour, and knew that for her those flowers must carry a sweeter message than their fragrance distilled, he would take a book, and read silently.

One day she was banking the mantelpiece with poppies, cultivated to such perfection that they distanced their country cousins by many leagues.

"Did you ever hear the legend of the poppy?" said Mr. Cantilupe.

"I believe those legends are all your own coining, Mr. Cantilupe," said Diana; "for, certainly, I have never come across them."

Mr. Cantilupe caught one of the gay flowers up, and, glancing curiously at it, commenced—

"Flora was one day wandering up and down our earth, followed by her maidens, and scattering her seeds here and there, and bending down to whisper to this flower her message, and that its secret, when one of the maidens said,

"'O Great Goddess, to-day, as we were passing through a glade, I stayed behind your train to speak to a maiden who was weeping bitter tears. "Can I help you?" I said, bending over her; "I am one of Flora's Court. All who belong to her train have learnt the language of Love, and not a flower but is related to this theme, which is hymned by the gods above as well as by mortals below." Then the maiden replied, "My love has gone to the wars; perchance he will

die. Oh! well were it if I could die with him." "The great goddess Flora will help you," said I; "in the form of a flower you shall attend on him if wounded, and heal him." And now, O Goddess, what wilt thou do?'

"Then Flora turned her about, and smiled as only Flora can smile—a smile which seemed for you alone, and yet penetrated each one with the same sense of the glad and gracious beauty of this earth.

"'What will I do? Why, thou hast said. Call the maiden to our presence.'

"So, weeping bitterly, the maiden approached the radiant Flora.

"'Poor child of earth, what are these bitter pains that you endure? The love we wot of, has nothing but ineffable bliss in its ascension higher and higher; for we are always going on into a further understanding of its divine essence.'

"'If my love die, let me die,' responded the maid.

"'Tis a sad thing, is this earthly love,' said Flora, addressing her maidens. 'For a few days the passion-flowers can breathe into those poor children a glimpse of heaven; but how soon can those passion-flowers fade and die! It would be well if we could create some blossoms which would blind these children to all wounds gotten here, so that whatever ill befall, if they carry this flower they will realise but dimly their sorrow.'

"Then all the Court answered, 'It were well, Great Goddess!' So Flora struck her rod upon the ground, and up sprang the beauteous poppy.

"'Hidden in its scarlet leaves, haste thee to thy lover,' said Flora to the weeping maid, 'and lay these seeds upon his wound, and, whatever ill from henceforth befall thee, never part thee from the poppy.'

"And so we see the poppy cure still operating," said Mr. Cantilupe. "My Diego has his poppies; he is greater than his deformity. Socrates had his poppies; he could jump upon all the fine speakers of his day, though he was such a 'plebish' fellow. Napoleon had his poppies when chained to the rock; he was so big a fellow that it had taken all Europe to catch him; but, *assez de Buonaparte.*"

"Have you any sympathy with him?" said Diana. She had arranged the poppies, and had now stepped back to view her work with the air of a connoisseur.

"To be in sympathy, there must be a corresponding channel of thought," said Mr. Cantilupe. "He carried out his ambitions by making a great noise; a great noise acts like wine on the masses."

"He stuck at nothing to obtain his ends,"

said Diana. "He could sink to the key-hole; he was detestable."

"It will take many centuries to make another Buonaparte," said Mr. Cantilupe. "These men are not made to order. He was a splendid actor, and actors should have no hearts; they should place a firm foot on the fragile flowers which are the offspring of that hot-house and charnel-house and receptacle for dry rubbish—all in one."

Diana shivered. She had never come into direct contact with the powers of evil. This man understood the heart, as he understood the head. He could investigate the evil that was in him, and label each separate tendency with appropriate names. She wondered if he needed the poppies worse than Buonaparte.

CHAPTER III.

FROM THAT MOMENT.

"What comes from God to us, returns from us to God."

Sir Blaise was in London: he had accepted a curacy at the East End.

"Dear! dear!" said Mrs. Battle, as she laid down the paper—"Dear! dear! Father Venables is one of the great preachers at St. Veronica's. I have heard Miss Edwards speak of him. She does the round of the churches when she comes to town—half an hour here, and a quarter of an hour there—three churches in a morning. However, in these matters I say every one must follow out their own theological feelings—each one

has to answer for themselves. Miss Beauchamp, are you not glad Sir Blaise Panmure is in town? Now he will come as he did at Whitefriars. Now we shall be happy!"

Diana clasped her arms above her head in her favourite attitude when in repose, and looked as Mrs. Battle had not seen her look for six months.

"Not so often as that, Mrs. Battle; but we *shall* see him."

"Maybe he will come and hear you recite, Miss Beauchamp."

"No, no," said Diana hastily. "I shall be a prosy Philistine in a year and a half now. Sir Blaise has nothing to do with this Bohemianism."

"Sir Blaise would be a proud man if he heard you," said Mrs. Battle insinuatingly; "as I said to Mrs. Bovin, talent can't be hedged in or walled round."

"Sir Blaise does not like it," said Diana, crimsoning; "but he is too generous to say so. Still, in a year and a half it will be all over."

"So different to Mr. Cantilupe," said Mrs. Battle, "who would have you exhibit yourself in every capital in Europe. But he is a foreigner, I know."

"It's the difference of race, I dare say," said Diana. "The Italians are born actors; they must act, it's a part of them; they live in public—they have no home-life. An Italian dramatizes every common incident of his life. If he buys a cabbage, he gives one the notion he is enacting some great historic part; he buys his cabbage before the world. The very dancing of the same man, a moment hence, to the sound of the viola or mandolin, is the expression of his poetic soul. There is a pose for an artist, every second. Mrs. Battle, yon and I will go to Italy some day."

"You won't want me when you go to Italy next time, I expect, Miss Beauchamp," said Mrs. Battle, looking as arch as it is possible for a lady, without either eyelash or eyebrow, to look. But Miss Beauchamp's reply was lost; for the door opened, and Sir Blaise Panmure was announced.

"We were talking about you, Sir Blaise," said Mrs. Battle excitedly; "we were reading about you in the papers but a minute ago." Her garrulous joy covered any agitation Diana and he may equally have felt after so long an absence; and then she bustled away on some imaginary errand; for, as she kept on repeating to herself as she pattered downstairs in high glee, "In tact and discernment, I, Martha Battle, am not lacking."

Looking at him as he sat down, facing her, Diana felt a sudden sense of strangeness. Sir Blaise in shooting-coats, and Sir Blaise in a

stock and a coat to his heels, seemed so different: she yearned for the shooting-coat. She felt as if he were set apart and unapproachable, in that very orthodox and demonstratively appropriating garb. Sir Blaise, with the quick sense of love, discerned it.

"I seem strange to you," he said; "but I'm just the same erring man. Touch my hand, and then you will feel my humanity."

He was laughing joyously.

It's a good thing to love and to be loved, and to feel that the world has retained some faint fragrance of Eden days yet about it. It's a good thing to be *sure* that there is a God above us, who is looking down upon us with delight, and telling us that His joys are with the sons of man.

It was thus Sir Blaise felt on that afternoon. It was *all* very good. Joyous day, known to many. There are few who can say,

"I never had one joyous day; one day, when I knew it was good to be born, and that it was a gracious thing to taste the sweetness of life, to feel and know that immortality is ours, and that *all* the joys of the world of Art, and the world of Nature, and the things of sense and sound, are ours by right of gift."

"Do you remember, some months ago, saying to me, 'Tell me of your life?'" said Diana, catching the gladness of his eyes, and, in the ineffable joy of seeing him again, losing the first sense of strangeness. "This is now what I am going to ask you. What of your life? How do you like your vicar? And is it not appalling to visit among these uncultivated, unwashed people?"

"In the flesh, intolerable. In the spirit, most blessed," said Sir Blaise, answering the latter part of her question. "But you must know Father Venables. I am working under

him, because the rare nature of the man so attracted me that I could not do otherwise. I met him by chance at Oxford, and we seemed mutually drawn to one another."

"Tell me all about him," said Diana. "Sketch him first outwardly, and then inwardly. I have not yet attained those heights when I can reverse those questions."

"Picture Fra Angelica then," said Sir Blaise, "mixing the pigments from the juice of flowers to paint the Christ. He has just such an expression. But then the constant meditation on all that is pure and holy must transfigure a face. He has done more to raise the tone of public worship in our National Church than any living Englishman. He has brought all the influence which rank, wealth, and culture inevitably bestow upon a man, to beautify our churches, and to help us, by the symbolism of a splendid worship, to enter

into the spirit of adoration with which the Church triumphant, as they veil their faces and bow their knees, enter into the majesty of their surroundings.

"*Never*, till I attended one of the services at St. Veronica's, had I entered into the depths of humiliation which the Christ bore for us, in the mysterious robing of His transcendent beauty in the form of man. As the blending of voices rang out in one grand harmony, through the beautiful fabric of St. Veronica, the Nicene Creed, which has descended to us in all its primitive simplicity, and those mysterious sentences fell like a message from the unseen world in our midst, '*And was made man*,' I did not wonder that each worshipper should fall upon his knees at such abnegation.

"Visit the haunts of sin in some thickly populated parts of London, and then let that

sentence take possession of you, '*And was made man.*' I wondered I, too, had never prostrated myself before in thankful amazement at His feet, as *this awful* yet blessed truth was repeated in our churches.

"I know no man who makes you apprehend whose presence you are in so marvellously as Father Venables. Each worshipper seems lost in the service, and helped by these external aids to enter into the mysticism of our Faith. Yet, for all this, no party can claim Father Venables; for he abhors, as surely we should abhor, party spirit. His preaching is very simple. One great fact seems always before him when in the pulpit—*eternity.* So at St. Veronica's we have a combination rarely met with. Preaching which, in its sincerity and simplicity, draws you to the Cross; and yet a beautiful service, which is, after all, but one of the outward expression of our Faith."

"What is the church like?" said Diana.

"It is beautiful. In the midst of surrounding squalor it stands up to witness of heaven. It is rich with pictures, not only in stained glass, but on canvas. We have in niches some copies, which, though they cannot catch the 'something' which was breathed into Fra Angelica or Raphael as they painted their conceptions, still are admirably good copies; and often, Father Venables tells me, men and women, shoeless and tattered, during the daytime creep in and stand wondering before them, as some faint notion of what Christ is as very Man, is represented to them. 'Tis a sermon more potent than words to them."

"The village homes are progressing towards completion," said Diana. "I went over to see them when I was last at Beauchamp."

Again Sir Blaise looked at Diana with that

sudden revelation of a great love, which needs no words when this revelation through the spirit throws poor words into the cold shade. And this time he would not let go the hand he had caught, as he said—

"Diana! may I tell you all now? But what have I to tell? You know it all. From that moment in the library at Whitefriars, when you sat so still before me with the old vellum-bound MS. in your hand, and the sun playing about your hair and burnishing it with gold, you have been to me the embodiment of those dreams which, until I met you, had never taken shape, but which had haunted me as the vision of the one woman whom I could call 'wife.' But words fall away from you; for words cannot express you."

Bending down, Diana's lips touched the bronzed hand of Sir Blaise, which yet held

hers. It was an act of homage; but this was Diana. Mingling with her love was a great reverence; had she not *seen* and *believed* that the true Shekinah was man?

But she did not answer. She was drinking in the full measure of her joy, and such moments do not come again. Other moments, perhaps, of joy in the ripeness of completion, but *not* the same moment.

Nothing in circumstance can really repeat itself; for *we* of *to-day* are not as we were *yesterday*. The sun will rise to-morrow and kiss the same sea, but not the same man. He has gathered fresh thoughts and nobler impulses, or baser desires and retrograding tendencies. We are approaching nearer to the spring-time of our eternity, or stealing back to the mire of our far-off country.

At last Diana spoke. "It won't seem long now—it did before. In one year and a

half my promise will be fulfilled, and until then we will hold our precious secret in our keeping."

A shade had crossed the brow of Sir Blaise; but Diana's wish on this point must be his. He said no more.

CHAPTER IV.

AGGRESSIVE LANDLORDS.

"*Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions match'd with mine*
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine."
LOCKSLEY HALL.

"DIEGO," said Mr. Cantilupe one day, in a jocular tone, "you must be quite a rich man by this time. The 'pieces' multiply, like everything else, pretty quickly in good keeping. But there is not much to be learnt from the consideration of the 'pieces.' A monied man is not necessarily a well-read man. Now, I think you ought to commence to read some subject, always with a view to the increase

of the 'pieces.' You follow me, Diego? But, bah!—you outrun me.

"Shakespeare, you are aware, Diego, had a good part of his plays written by those who had caught his spirit—this is my belief; and as for the great painters, it is hard to know who rounded the limbs of their extraordinary conceptions.

"Take the 'Venus de' Medici'; how many sculptors may have moulded that form, which is the wonder of the world? You remember the 'Venus de' Medici' in the Uffizi Gallery, Diego? I think I showed you every Apollo, Bacchus, Mercury, and Faun of note in Florence.

"You have a thought beyond the 'pieces,' Diego. Though I suppose if I could see you at your games, when I, for instance, am fast asleep, I should be inclined to think that old Pluto had bewitched you. Those antique

sculptors understood the beauty of form. Then, Diego, do you remember Michael Angelo's 'Fates.' Very grim and pitiless they looked, did they not? But sympathy won't do when we are cutting into fate. I feel in a talkative mood to-night, Diego. Come and sit down opposite me. Pooh! Diego, sit down comfortably—we are brothers."

It was evening, and Mr. Cantilupe turned the full glare of the electric globe (which was fixed on a movable stand) on the sphinx-like features of the dwarf, and himself withdrew into the shade.

"Think you, Diego, if a living woman appeared before one, the counterpart of the 'Venus de' Medici,' with a form shaped like a flower (poetic license, Diego), think you a tussle with those grim 'Fates' of Michael Angelo's would be a likely result?

"The 'Venus de' Medici' is unlike all the

other 'Venuses,' remember, Diego. Bah! What leering, odious creatures they seemed after the intellectual purity of this Venus, who stands aside, apart from all other creations! I remember well that I stood before her, with my hat in my hand; she seemed a living woman cut into chaste marble.

"Well, we will leave this Venus in the Uffizi Gallery; we won't interfere with her. Let the sculptors try their best, there will be but *one* 'Venus de' Medici' in marble; perfect creations don't repeat themselves. These antique sculptors understood the beauty of form; the sculptors of to-day are cutters of stone or moulders of clay—nothing more.

"Then, Diego, do you remember our visit to the Barberini Gallery, and how long we stood before the 'Beatrice Cenci,' wondering what secret those eyes strove to hide? You have seen the masterpieces of the world,

Diego, and have doubtless profited by them; and now I want to enlarge your mind yet further.

"Art is wonderful, even when it expresses what is sinful to look upon. It brings us in contact with the supernatural, for some dark angel stood by to guide the chisel or brush—white-robed as Lucifer when he clothes himself in light.

"After our visit to Italy, Diego, some five years ago, you remember we went to Ireland, and how destitute of artistic conceptions, for all its green, that unhappy country looked to us, with its gaunt buildings and bare streets. Our interest in those people was superficial, for we knew nothing of the ills which drove them to desperate deeds. There was anarchy then in the bud, but we have it in the flower now.

"I think, Diego, you should study this

subject of Home Rule, Land League, Parnellism, Fenianism, and Agrarian outrages; know the entire lingo, and be able to enter as intelligently into the spirit of these Celts as into the ethics of Art-talk.

"I am ambitious for you, Diego; you are not half rich enough yet. I dare say those money-boxes of yours will hold a great many more pieces yet. You won't have anything to do with our fifty per cents., so the 'pieces' don't run the same chance with you as they do with us; still, it's pleasant to keep what we love close at hand—eh, Diego? Pleasant to the touch and eye. You understand me, Diego? But, bah! As I said before—you outrun me."

"I *understand* you," said Diego with an ugly leer.

"It's pleasant to be understood," said Mr. Cantilupe, stretching his hands before the

wood fire. The flame seemed to leap upward more gaily at the sight of those long, thin, transparent fingers of his, as if such fuel looked dainty. "Pleasant not to have to say what one has to say, in bald, staring words, without a background of foliage to set them off. Pleasant to know one is conversing with an intelligence which outruns your own.

"It was a fortunate day when I met you, Diego. Many years ago now since we met, and were mutually pleased with one another. That little organ of yours had a sweet tone, for all its huskiness, and the pathos of your friend Petterini's face I shall not soon forget. You always addressed Petterini in the lingua Toscana. You brought him from Siena, you said. You were very unhappy when Petterini died, Diego. I really think you liked him better than the pieces. We grow attached to even a monkey, sometimes; don't we, Diego?"

"I liked Petterini because he picked up the scudi," said Diego, chuckling. "Petterini was off with his cap to the ladies like any cavalier, and he had a way of puckering his brow—the cunning one—that sent them off a-laughing; and get a laugh out of a lady, and the scudi are sure to follow. Yes, yes, the chattering one! I would give him warm shelter when he did his work well. And he would look up in my face so anxiously to know if he had gathered enough for that day. And if I smiled, he knew, the clever one—he knew—and would off with his cap three times, and the puckers would all smooth out, and the weight of the world seemed lifted off his shoulders. No Premier could look more worried than Petterini, over a last Budget, if the scudi did not flow in. I liked him well, the cunning one."

"You buried the organ and Petterini together, I think, Diego?" said Mr. Cantilupe. "It was

a strange fancy of yours, that Petterini should rest on the top of the old organ he had sat and danced many a year upon—a pretty conceit, I call it."

"Yes, I buried them together," said Diego. "I've a bit of ground not quite so extensive as an Irish landlord's" (here he leered), "but a bit of ground I can call my own, out of London, some distance. There lies Petterini and the old organ."

"Well, Diego," said Mr. Cantilupe, rising and pacing the room, "that old organ of yours had many a tune in its lumbering old case. I remember one now—it was out of some opera, and first called my attention to you, as you stood with the snow falling all round you in Regent Street. It was a love-song.

"We are in the midst of a love-game now, as I said before. We want to carry off the 'Venus de' Medici,' not from the Uffizi

Gallery, but her like in flesh-tints; and the game plays itself out slowly, all too slowly, for an ardent lover such as the Duca di Cantilupe.

"But we must not quarrel with our friend Time. Remember, Diego, 'tis the gracious beauty of this living Venus we are to possess! We have always coveted the rare, the difficult to obtain—*all here* is rare.

"Look at these amber goblets. How many months, think you, before I obtained them? Seven — seven months of strategy, not ill spent. See here, Diego, when this 'Venus de' Medici' is mine, I will charge you in a bumper of red wine out of this amber goblet. I little thought when I obtained them I should drink to a bride. Most things I've obtained with less difficulty; most things I can obtain as quickly as electricity operates.

"But Cleopatra drank to Antony in one of

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

these goblets. Bewitchment lurks in the amber — an indefinable spell. Poor Antony held the one, and Cleopatra the other. Picture the scene, Diego! War, conquest, duty, all buried in the red wine in the amber goblet, as he drank that draught which wrought his ruin.

"Seven months' strategy to obtain a pair of amber goblets, and two years' strategy to obtain this modern Diana! Now, Diego, I won't keep you longer from the 'pieces'; it's getting late, and you have to count over your scudi. Begin your study to-morrow. You will find a number of books and pamphlets on the subject awaiting you; and, thanks to my training, you know English more grammatically than your native lingua Toscana. We may never need all this political lingo to come to our aid; on the other hand, we may not be able to win our love-game without such a comprehensive

grasp on the ills and woes of Ireland as will compel us to assist them from the iron heel of their aggressive landlords.

"And now, Diego, good night. Sleep well —and here are some more 'pieces' to build up the golden god."

Chuckling and leering with equal vehemence, Diego shuffled from his master's presence.

CHAPTER V.

A SHEFFIELD LADY.

"The flower
That blows a globe of after arrowlets."

LONDON had become Diana's home now. She only resorted to Beauchamp during vacation. Her recitations at Cosmos Hall drew larger audiences every week.

"Theatres seem tame after one has been to hear The Beauchamp" was the oft-repeated opinion of Mr. Savage.

"Study Miss Beauchamp, if you would know how to dress, how to speak, how to move, and how to cover æstheticism with glory; she is the exponent of the Beautiful."

And his obedient disciples thronged the doors of Cosmos Hall, and sate drinking in this knowledge of how to dress, how to speak, how to move, and how to robe æstheticism in a garment less ostentatiously green and yellow.

One morning, Felicia Novello, accompanied by Francisca Masters, appeared at M—— Street. Diana was deep in thought, as usual, studying the "Faërie Queen"; for there was to be a selection from "Ye Ancient Poets" that evening, and Diana always threw herself into the spirit of the times, as well as the spirit of the author.

"Olde English mood," she had said to Mrs. Battle that morning at breakfast, and Mrs. Battle had glanced over the urn at her, and said, "That's right, Miss Beauchamp! Be thoroughly English. There is no nation can beat us in poetry, or what not."

Francisca Masters, after embracing Diana, held her at arm's-length and regarded her.

"Miss Beauchamp! subtle Miss Beauchamp! So you have run off with our bonnie Panmure. The papers are full of you again. It was Mr. Cantilupe last time, and now it's Sir Blaise. Don't betray me when you are Lady Panmure, and tell Sir Blaise how I loved him; it will be very naughty of you if you do; and I'm getting my trousseau ready, for I really have succumbed to the protestations of Major Clintock, and am going to be married next month."

"Now, Francisca," said Diana, calmly surveying her from her position at arm's length, "did I not tell you once before, No sanctuary intimacies for me? I am in no way interested in any information which I do not directly authenticate."

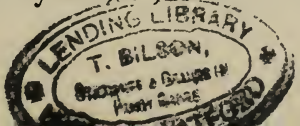
Francisca coloured to the roots of her hair.

"I have tripped and gone backwards, but I believe our blue-blues was crossed somewhere a century or two ago. There was an intermarriage with Sheffield cutlery; so forgive me. I lay all the blame on the lady from Sheffield. Bless her steels and bones."

Felicia gave way to laughter, and Diana followed on, whilst Francisca threw herself into a chair and extended her foot; whether for admiration or the reverse, she soon let her observers know.

"The lady from Sheffield also handed me down this foot. Now, poor dear Clintock has one accentuatedly weak point, and that is a good foot! He began to talk, soon after I was engaged to him, about old Greek feet, and of course I saw he was a connoisseur. He said:—

"'Take statuary—the first toe is as long as the big toe in a Greek foot proper; the ankle is exquisitely slender, the foot long.'



"Looking at him as coquettishly as my Wellingtonian nose would allow, I said:

"I'll order my trousseau dresses to be made to cover my toes then, Clintock, for there is nothing of the old Greek proper about my feet."

"'Don't wear high heels,' he said, 'and don't attempt anything with them. Get a good broad heel and a flat sole, and then anybody who may chance to see them will consider that you are going in for hygiene, and it will be all right.'

"And *that* is the boot! Now what do you think of it?"

"My dear Francisca," said Felicia, "a little friendly advice is not a bad thing; take mine —You will be a perfect object, before two months are over your head, if you give way to these crude suggestions of uninformed men. *They* wear inverted chimney-pots and fussy

frock-coats and busbies, and squaw feathers, and goodness knows what. And *we* say nothing to them, but bestow our unlimited admiration on these dignified appurtenances to the art of Peace and War. Major Clintock has commenced at your feet, he will ascend to your crown by-and-by. Come to 'Papillon's' at once, and be *chaussée'd* properly."

"I really think I will," said Francisca, "though all the same I wish I had those Greek toes and slender ankles. I stepped out in happy ignorance till Clintock took the dash out of those inherited members. It's really cruel to let a Sheffield lady get into one's family—there's no end to the mischief she will entail upon one. Mamma never mentions her without tears—she was something dreadful, I believe."

"What of your book," said Diana; "is the partnership dissolved?"

"Felicia will make a much better book than I should," said Francisca; "with her the book will make itself—she is going to Italy to write it. I tell her she had far better stay in England and take what comes to hand. Study Betty, the cowkeeper, and write of her. Look at George Eliot, how she weaved her grand sentiments into the commonplace lives of most of her heroes and heroines. We associate with them quite happily. She was a fine etcher, exquisitely fine. You must look into her sentences and peer long, before the deep meaning and widely branching thought, which characterize each one of her finely worked up figures, come to be appreciated."

"I think she wrought her books much as Cellini wrought his wonderful designs in gold," said Diana.

"She was not prolific," said Francisca.

"In comparison with other well-known writers, her books are few."

"I contend that genius is prolific," said Diana, "and talent is not. Talent produces more mellow fruits. There is often an autumnal luxuriance about the fruit of talent, while genius has glaring defects and yet possesses something, that in its uncatchable beauty allures you to follow after it through untranslatable regions of thought. It's will-o'-the-wispish."

"I wonder," said Felicia, standing up, and assuming her favourite pose — hand turned upwards on the hip, "whether I have talent, or genius, or perseverance; whether I shall live to enjoy my fame, or whether I shall look down from a planet and see the fruit of my labour? I was caught by the mystery of the planets the other night.

"I was staying with some friends in Hamp-

shire, and escaping from the inanities of the drawing-room, I went out into the dark. The trees stood so still in the perfect beauty of their nakedness (leaves cover up the beauty of their proportions, however good for shade and lovely for the play of light they may be), and the stars, set in deepest blue, were shining down upon me with their strange meaning, which no sage has yet deciphered.

"I thought, 'All is mystery, inside and out. How is it that poets, authors, or philosophers have the enterprise to try and decipher either the anatomy of the spirit, the anatomy of the body, or the anatomy of a tree?'

"Elevated and dispirited, I crept back into the drawing-room, and found the party waltzing. They really looked, as they hugged each other round the room, like a number of marionettes jumping about to the strings that pulled them. I wished we could dance as

Corinne danced before her audience, with the supple grace which showed to what a wonderful range of thought in motion these supple bodies of ours can be trained. Any way and any how, rather than this hop, glide, or bob, which conveys a notion of heat without fire, or smoke without flame, if such anachronisms are possible."

"It's all very fine, Felicia," said Francisca; "but I can give you an instance to prove how much good a spin round a room can do you. I was very low after Clintock's discourse on the old Greek foot—I looked at my little short stump with the Sheffield ankle, and hated it. In the evening I went to a dance. In the whirl, and in an attempt to keep my feet on the most slippery piece of wax I ever danced on, I came down with a crash, and felt so pleasantly exhilarated that I recovered my equanimity. Nevertheless, we will go to

Papillon's, and see what can be done with our 'poor feet.'

"By-the-by, Diana, in two years or less, I hear that you are going to quit the platform. I don't suppose it's a stage, though you are as full of the drama as the earth is of electricity. It is said that you have signed an engagement. Naughty Mr. Cantilupe! It's well known that Cosmos Hall is his own, every niche and stone of it. Do you think that he would lay the floor with lapis lazuli (a fortune in itself) for somebody else's benefit? Your stage is arranged exactly like a room in an old Italian palace. But it is said that Mr. Cantilupe is a duca, only won't own it, for some reason or other. He has helped you amazingly, my dear, though, and it will seem rather hard to him to see bonnie Panmure gather the rose we can all see he covets.

"No doubt he will throw himself into a trance, and mesmerize his grief into the land of oblivion. But here I am slipping backwards again. Oh, that Sheffield lady, who did destroy our breed, to mamma's consternation and to my unhappy experience."

"Good-bye, Francisca," said Diana, taking up the "Faërie Queen" with unruffled brow. "Take care of the Sheffield toes when you come in contact with the six Misses Clintock."

But Francisca had vanished in her own noise, and only Felicia turned round to say smilingly :—

"Major Clintock can't keep her in order a bit; he won't try, I suppose, until he is married. He does nothing but smile and say, 'Haw, don't you know!' except when he gets on to the Greek foot, or coaches Colonel Trelawny, who believes in his superiority;

and nothing sharpens one up so much as another person's belief in one's superiority. You believe in me, I will conquer the world."

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE FLOW.

"I said, what better home shall this heart seek? Here let me dwell for aye."

"Prais'd be the fathomless Universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love. But praise! praise! praise!
For the sure enwinding arms of cool enfolding death."

EVERY Saturday afternoon Sir Blaise found his way to M—— Street; but his appearance there in no way kept Mr. Cantilupe from displaying his long and slender person on the lounge, which occupied one corner of the room, and invited an elegant ease of attitude possible only for one of Southern race,

when it would have been truly ungraceful, and even impolite, if attempted by the burly proportions or vigorous athleticism of a Saxoner.

"He had better lie down on the hearth-rug," Mrs. Battle said one day. "He is an actor, if ever there was one. He has not a bone in his body, I feel sure. Perhaps he was a tumbler in Italy, a fellow who went about with half a dozen other fellows on his head and one on the palm of each hand; and if he happened to take a spite against one of his troupe, he would topple him over—by the merest accident, of course."

"Mrs. Battle, I am weary of endeavouring to curb your sinful expressions and unmitigated resentment," said Diana.

"It is useless," said Mrs. Battle, "for my dislike is on the increase.

"*He* knows very well that Sir Blaise comes

on Saturday afternoons, from the midst of his work, to see the apple of his eye; and will he allow such pleasure to Sir Blaise? *No!*

"There he half sits, half lies on that couch, like a panther ready to spring. It makes me nervous. But I really do grow more nervous every day, Miss Beauchamp. Those eyes of Mr. Cantilupe, for ever fixed on either you or me; and seeing, as I can see perfectly well, that he is not taking this tremendous interest in you for nothing.

"I know little enough about men; I don't pretend to be up to them, or up in the ways of the world. Poor dear Mr. Battle was a *very* simple sort of man, wedded to his 'hops' and me; it was not in him to be unfathomable. The few people with whom I have been thrown (till lately), have been all of this type —thoroughly English."

"And now," said Diana, "you are beginning

to extend your experiences—to discover that everybody is not turned out after the same pattern."

Then she continued, half petulantly—

"You know I have signed for two years. You are aware of all the kindness Mr. Cantilupe has shown me; and it *does* seem really too bad, when I am trampling down my own inclinations, to upset me with these constant forebodings. You have goaded me to speak at last, and I *will* speak! Do I not *long* for the day, when, with Beauchamp free, I can welcome the dearest hope of my life, to take its abiding place in my heart—when I can translate the sweetest dream that was ever whispered to a mortal ear, into the sacred charm of fruition!"

Diana's tone had risen, the floodgates were open, and in the onward sweep of passion the tension which had at first shown itself in

petulance was merged in the utterance of her hitherto pent-up but dearest desires.

"Is it nothing twice to have laid aside my love for the attainment of an object which, having dedicated myself to achieve, I have striven at all cost to cling to? Is it nothing day by day to long to give expression to my love, in the only way I would care to, and yet to forego it? Two weary years stand between my joy and me. Is it nothing?"

Tears had welled up in Diana's eyes—tears of mingled sentiments. She had laid aside for the time being her love for the carrying out of a purpose; and Mrs. Battle must be for ever crying out that Mr. Cantilupe would do her some ill. And beneath the petulance caused by her remonstrances was the warning note that he himself had sounded, when he had told her in those words which had often recurred to her memory—that not only could

she draw all that was best to herself in a Nature, but all that was worst.

What did he—could he—mean? Had love on its other side, hate? Was it a reversible thing this sweet yet terrifying love, on which in some sort the very world revolves on its axis?

Diana had never shaped the impressions which in an indefinite spectral form lurked at the bottom of her outburst; none the less, she was conscious it would have been well for her if she had never signed the paper—if she had given up her ambition, and yielded to the higher dictates of her love.

Never, perhaps, had Mrs. Battle looked better pleased than at this moment. She rose from her chair with widely-spread arms, and caught Diana in her ample embrace.

"Dear heart! dear heart! you have made me glad. You are attached to Sir Blaise.

T. BILSON,

How could I doubt it? You will be Lady Panmure. You will live at Whitefriars. You are sure of his love—the love of the noblest, most perfect man that the world has seen since the days of Adam. I guessed it all, it's true; but guesswork is like poking about for your spectacles in a dark room. I have knocked myself against this piece of furniture and that, and at last I have found my 'specs.' I can see. And now let me tell you what I ventured to say to Mr. Cantilupe, and ever since have been so frightened for fear I said too much. He came and sat down beside me, and commenced his clever talk, all about you. And at last I said how I thought it would be; and he pretended to be as pleased as myself. Test his pleasure, by getting him to permit you to rescind his engagement."

Gently disengaging herself from the ample embrace in which Mrs. Battle yet detained

her, Diana rose and paced the room. For, like Mr. Cantilupe, she, too, found a quicker outlet for thoughts of action in rapid motion.

Pride was weakening, ambition paling; whilst love, like a rosy cloud, hovered overhead, only waiting to catch her up into the mystic dreaminess of those well-trodden, yet ever-untrodden, lands.

He professed to be truly interested in her; there were doubtless mutual advantages in the compact. But, then, Mr. Cantilupe was rich. Would he let her, after all, forego the recitations?

When some cherished scheme is being relinquished, even for the attainment of one yet more cherished, there are moments needed for reflection—for studying each well-known feature of the scheme that had claimed us, before it pales off the canvas of our lives and passes away into the mists of memory.

She had told Sir Blaise that not even a great love would make her forego her ambition; and now she was ready to forego anything to enter into the full measure of this longed-for union.

The triumphs of her career, the throb which she could awaken at the heart of her audience by the force of those dramatic impersonations, which had broken in upon the dead level of their conventional existences, and often set free a hundred sentiments which had hitherto lain dormant or unheeded in the mental cells of their experiences,—*this* she could cast from her, without one backward glance, for one beat from the heart of Sir Blaise as she gave way to her desire to tell him all he was to her.

"Test his interest in you," reiterated Mrs. Battle. "He will be here this afternoon, as sure as the clock ticks."

"So will Sir Blaise," said Diana, half smiling.

"To-morrow, then," said Mrs. Battle; "I

get so confused now-a-days that I forget the days of the week. I thought to-day was Friday. Just as if Mr. Cantilupe could not leave the field clear for Sir Blaise one day in the week. I've taken such a dislike to that lounge over there, Miss Beauchamp, I assure you, that when I am coming into this room sometimes in the dusk, I'm ready to scream out like the paper-boys. I fancy I see Mr. Cantilupe sitting on it."

"What news!" she continued, breaking out in broken sentences expressive of her great contentment—"what fulfilment of unspoken wishes! For I don't think I have even hinted my hopes, Miss Beauchamp, always fearing the influence of that serpent-like man, with his Nero-like tendencies and his artist nature. He is enamelled with poetry and connoisseurship, and a high state of cultivation, if you like; but break through the enamel,

and you would say, 'I like not his complexion.'"

But Diana turned round in some warmth. "It seems so ungrateful to listen to such suppositions—I cannot hear them." And then the momentary blaze vanished in a smile, as she said:

"Nero is added on now to the various disguises in which Mr. Cantilupe appears before you. However, I suppose your imagination must run the length of its tether. It has taken you back to the days when you were finished off with a rap on the knuckles."

"I've heard so much about Art since I have lived with you," said Mrs. Battle. "'Tis a part of you. It is like the perfect finish of your toilet. It decorates you like a rose in your hair. 'Tis like the beautiful carving on a stately building. But on him 'tis a mere cloak to hide deformity."

"I don't think even Mr. Cantilupe could excel you in metaphors," said Diana. "We shall see what he says to my proposition."

And then both ladies stopped speaking; for Sir Blaise, followed by Mr. Cantilupe, had entered the room.

CHAPTER VII.

FICTION BECOMES FACT.

"Our being is no shadow of thin air,
No vacant dream.
No fable of the things that never were,
But only seem.
'Tis full of meaning as of mystery,
Tho' strange and solemn may that meaning be."

THEY had met at the hall-door, and as they had stood exchanging the common civilities or courtesies of life, how difficult to any ordinary onlooker it would have been to believe what ties in reality linked these two men to each other—the tie of a common love, and on *one* side the tie of a deadly hate. Yet Mr. Cantilupe smiled, and made way

for Sir Blaise up the staircase, and even insisted on handing him tea, persistently putting aside the offices of Diana's black page—another of Mr. Cantilupe's importations.

"There is twice the style in a black skin, Miss Beauchamp," he had said; "don't have an English buttons. I know of the very boy you require."

And Diana, to the dismay of Mrs. Battle, had yielded—partly because she agreed about the black skin, and partly to save trouble.

"You look tired, Sir Blaise," Mr. Cantilupe said, furtively watching the sudden droop of Diana's eyelids at this haphazard remark. Love, on the flow of its passion, finds the thought of the Nemesis unendurable. It is garbed with perennial strength—it has plucked the fruit of the tree of life—it will live for ever.

"I think Sir Blaise could have a round with Goliath this minute," said Mrs. Battle brusquely. "Run at him, jump on him, and cut off his head."

"Now don't abuse the Philistines," said Diana. "My soubriquet, Francisca Masters tells me, in Leominster, is 'Miss Beauchamp: a Philistine.'"

"That's Miss Edwards's doing," said Mrs. Battle. "She reads Matthew somebody or other a great deal, and these clever men give the edge to her tongue."

"Father Venables was coming with me this afternoon," said Sir Blaise, "only at the last moment he was detained. He desires to make your acquaintance, and now he won't be able to come till I return from Ireland. I have to go over there for a couple of months. It's particularly awkward—just as I had commenced work. But I can't

avoid inherited responsibilities. The only thing to do is to make a good use of them. Father Venables is full of schemes, and we are going to lay them all before you."

Sir Blaise's tone had a proprietary ring in it that was intoxicating Mrs. Battle; she caught up a piece of embroidery and commenced to stitch furiously, and glanced furtively at Mr. Cantilupe, who had assumed his actor pose on the lounge, apparently indifferently interested.

"Father Venables," continued Sir Blaise enthusiastically, "has gigantic hopes. He reminds me of one of the Crusaders—nothing daunts him—nothing."

"If he would only not call himself Father," said Mrs. Battle. "I don't like that; it's contrary to my theological training to like it. I don't like it—Fathers and Sisters and Brothers.

I don't like it. I can't like it. Why should I like it?"

"Why, indeed?" said Diana, looking at Sir Blaise, and smiling.

"I wonder," said Mr. Cantilupe, glancing at Sir Blaise, "that you have not become a friar, like your ancestor, Sir Sholto."

"These are not the days for monasteries," said Sir Blaise, turning round and facing Mr. Cantilupe, with vigorous purpose animating the massive beauty of his features. "These are the days for rallying round a standard, which, though battered and in fragments from the great fight which she has fought, yet waves over Christendom with her ancient glory, and defies the world."

Mr. Cantilupe turned the leaves of the book he held. Sir Blaise was animated with zeal and blessed with a human love. Mr. Cantilupe was neither.

It's easy to talk, and talk well, when things run smoothly with us—when we inhale the fragrance of life—when we find it good to be born. A true faith will yet rally round the standard, though the ground bears nothing but thorns and thistles, and such flowers as grow in the path seem to distil no fragrance. Yet the animation, the glad light in the eye, the vigour, is lacking.

"I used to think it such a shame when flowers were never seen in our churches," said Diana. "I find such moral teaching in them. Mr. Cantilupe is a great believer in them, too. He thinks they are things full of life—living, growing, and ever changing with ourselves. He can relate legends by the hour about flowers."

But Mr. Cantilupe for once avoided Diana's eyes, which were seeking his with a friendly smile in their expressive pupils.

"You know," said Sir Blaise, "that De Rancé says, 'To love Nature with an infinite tenderness is the characteristic of a pure mind'; and St. Bernard insists on the association of the love of Nature and the love of God; and Maître Mollet says, live with flowers—'Et vous sentirez saisi du plus tendre interêt pour cette charmante famille des fleurs dont les pudeurs, dont les passions, dont les involontaires et innocentes faiblesses, dont les sentiments vous sont derouillés.'"

"De Rancé was an interesting man," said Mr. Cantilupe, suddenly rising; "he was one by himself. When he was young, he was old; he had great ideas, and great ideas will make the youngest older than the oldest; besides, he had a past—the skull of the woman he loved so well was found in his cell at La Trappe. Here was love in one of its strange forms. De Rancé, you see, was satisfied with a skull. I

think I should hardly care for such an anatomical study. But I must be off. I hope you will have a pleasant visit to Ireland, Sir Blaise; keep out of the way of bullets. Poor Lord F——, how fresh that affair is yet in our memories!"

Smiling and bowing, he closed the door equally on himself and Mrs. Battle.

"Ah! Mrs. Battle, I think our little romance works well. I think fiction is moulding into fact. Not often the case, for fiction is, as a rule, such a put-together-out-of-one's-head sort of thing."

But Mrs. Battle only smiled as she trotted past him up the staircase—smiled quite lovingly on him, for her.

As the door closed, Diana rose, and holding out her hands towards Sir Blaise, said—"I cannot bear it. You must not go to Ireland!"

At the sound of her voice, and, more, the fright in her eyes, Sir Blaise sprang to his feet, and caught her out-stretched hands in his, and their lips met. . . . . .

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT WORLD IS THIS?

"*Felices ter et amplius*
Quos irrupta tenet copula."—HORACE.

THE hours sped, but neither Diana nor Sir Blaise took note of time. Surely love must be for ever foreboding an eternal parting, or why this covetous counting up of minutes as if to-morrow would never dawn, and they two sit side by side, telling out the story which has been spoken in every language, and strung to every instrument, and transcribed in a thousand ways since the world began?

"You *won't* go to Ireland then, Blaise?" Diana said at last.

She had come back to her fears, though the substance of them seemed gone, while her hands were held in that powerful clasp of Sir Blaise.

"Yes, I will," he said, laughing; "but we will go together. Will this do, Di?"

Diana laughed back. *This* was to live: had she ever really lived before?

After all, existence is only grasped at all but by contrasts. Perhaps we could never construe Divine Love properly unless we had dimly apprehended it in some human form. We should never thoroughly enter into joy unless we knew something of misery. Contrast is the strange mirror in which we trace out the lineaments of our experiences.

"I can easily put off my business there for a couple of months," he continued; "and then I can introduce my wife to the tenants, and they will run and kiss your shadow, Di. You can't think how really warm-hearted they are."

"But, Blaise, the recitations! Mr. Cantilupe counts on my attendance at the Cosmos for a year and a half more. He counted on my ambition when he made his proposition."

"We have slain Goliath," said Sir Blaise; "Mrs. Battle's words have come true;" and they both laughed, looking into one another's faces joyously.

"If he insists, what shall I do, Blaise?"

"He won't insist. But even if he should, you shall carry on the recitations as Lady Panmure, and never mind what the world says. After all, you are only putting higher thoughts and nobler ideals into the minds of your audience."

"You *do* love me, Blaise," she said, stooping to pick up a flower which had fallen from her belt. She did not want him to see the gathering tears.

"Is *this* the way to prove it?" he said,

turning her face towards him, and fondly regarding it. "I wish I could prove it some other way. What would I not do for you? It seems too great a gift to have your love. I am such a stupid fellow in comparison with such a man as Cantilupe. He can talk to you of hundreds of things I know nothing about; but, Di, I have been studying all those topics which interest you. My wife shall find I can talk about Art, too. I constantly say to myself, 'Di is an artiste; I shan't forget this.'"

"You will forget everything about her, Blaise, except this one thing—that she loves you; and that her love is not limited by time or eternity, for there will never be an end to it."

"No, darling," he said reverently. "There will never be an end, for true love is immortal. Sometimes I wonder if there ever was a

beginning to our love. I seem to have known you all my life in dreams; and when I was first conscious of my love, it seemed like waking up to find that this dream was *no* dream, but a living, blissful reality."

"You won't mind the recitations, Blaise?" said Diana, again going back to her fear of Mr. Cantilupe.

"I won't mind anything," said he, ruffling her hair over her brow fondly and laughingly, "so long as you are Lady Panmure. Now, are you satisfied?"

And as Diana's lips met his, she thought she was *indeed* satisfied.

CHAPTER IX.

GOLDEN MOMENTS.

"Days come and go,
In joy or woe;
Days go and come,
In endless sum."

"I KNOW I'm a tiresome person," said Mrs. Battle, at last appearing in the doorway; "but the gong sounded some time ago. I thought, perhaps, you did not hear."

"Hear! of course we did not," said Diana, flying up to her and dragging her towards Sir Blaise. "*We* are deaf and dumb, and everything else that's stupid; and the extraordinary thing is that, notwithstanding all

our afflictions, we are so happy—so happy that the world seems altogether too lovely."

"What does Mrs. Battle say to it all?" says Sir Blaise, rising and standing before her with glad eyes. "Is she pleased?"

"How can she be pleased, Blaise?" said Diana mischievously. "You are, in the first place, the worst possible match for me. You have nothing to recommend you in any way. You are dreadfully poor, and dreadfully stupid, and dreadfully ugly. *Why* I am so infatuated about you I *can't* think. Perhaps that naughty Puck has squeezed some of those love-drops of his into my eyes, and I shall wake up some day, and say to myself, 'Why did I love him?'

"Is Mrs. Battle pleased? Blaise! Blaise! that's just like you. Now I will tell you a secret. She is so romantic that she has projected this alliance for months, and kept

it all to herself, or nearly all. She would not be so essentially feminine as she is if she did not show a glimpse of her private desires to an inquiring mind such as mine."

"No wonder Miss Beauchamp is happy," said Mrs. Battle. "If I am so happy about it all, Sir Blaise, what must she be?"

"Do you remember," said Diana, placing her hands on Mrs. Battle's shoulders and holding her playfully, "that evening at Beauchamp when I made you vow you would never leave me? I think it would be as well to renew it before Sir Blaise. You knew him before he had ever seen me. Does it not seem odd to think there was a time when we had never seen each other—a time when I carried on my recitations in Italy all by myself, and did not know anything about him?"

"It was too bad of Mrs. Battle not to tell me all about you," said Sir Blaise. "I should

have gone to Italy and brought you back to Sir Golf. I can't think what he was about."

"I believe," said Diana, laughing, "he was catching salmon, and we all know how they tug. Is it likely he should remember my insignificant existence? Besides, I was poor, and the poor slip out of everybody's memory. The only poor relations to whom the world pays any attention are the monkeys. Now let's come and dine. Mrs. Battle thinks the loss of dinner a serious matter. She never allows any latitude in that direction. I assure you, Blaise, she was in a terribly perplexed state of mind one night, not so very long ago, when I shut myself into my room, and pondered over my agreement with Mr. Cantilupe."

"I'm a practical person, Sir Blaise," said Mrs. Battle, "and I don't think it's seemly we should go about like ghosts before our time. No human being can stand up without food, and

look the same. Poor Mr. Battle, when 'hops' went wrong, refused food. I said, 'You will be taken in more than ever now, Mr. Battle. You will have no physical strength to combat your difficulties.'"

"Happiness feeds," said Diana, "nevertheless. Let us come and dine."

Happy day! blessed day! If there were many such days, could any one feel that a change would be better?

No. As Nature has her moments of entrancement when the sun gilds the mountain-side till it glows with a rapture no brush can adequately paint; when the bees are busy amidst the dreamy heather; when the breeze is whispering its amorous tale to the budding trees, and the birds hush their songs to listen to the throb of an awakening earth—so surely must the chill days follow when the same mountain-side knows no summer kiss—when the breeze moans in the

same tree-tops, and the birds fold their wings in fear. For the Nemesis, Death, is abroad, with his haunting cry and his blasting touch.

Oh! sin-dashed world, even Love, which finds a place in your economy, must pass through the gloomy portals. Yet, carrying the shade of its regeneration amidst its ashes, it shall rise in its purified beauty in God's own Paradise.

CHAPTER X.

DIEGO'S LOVES.

"Our riches will leave us sick,
There will be bitterness in our laughter."

When Mr. Cantilupe received a note from Diana the following morning, requesting him to call upon her that afternoon, he was immediately in possession of the announcement she had to make to him.

With head bent in his hands, he sat for fully an hour in profound thought—the moment for crystallizing action had come, and he was busy.

A hideous crew of demons formed his company. He inclined his ears to their whispers—he besought their aid.

Diana was about to slip from his grasp, *but*—hideous *but*——.

Even to himself he would not deliberately name the deed which should shroud her days in gloom.

"Italian blood is not the sweetest to play with," thought he. "History proves it.

"How can I help my hereditary failings? What I desire, I will have.

"I desired this Diana; she fits me as no other woman could. The hours pass like minutes in her presence; her beauty is of the genus Cultivated. Nothing less could have charmed me. 'A form of grace—lips of persuasion.' She has penetrated me.

"I warned her she could draw all that was worst to herself, for the very violence of the love she evokes, if thwarted, is sure to turn to hate.

"And now, how shall it be? She will

ask me to let her give up the recitations, and if I say 'No,' she will smile sweetly, yet haughtily, and say, 'Then must I appear as Lady Panmure.'

"My plan has failed; I deemed Panmure too proud a man to permit this. But I mistook him; his love has outleapt pride.

"*How* he, too, loves her. One might envy the streams of *such* a love, for the sources are pure. Oh! I can appreciate all that is high in the ethics of a passion as well as I can appreciate the outline of a perfect form.

"None the less can I be remorseless in my purpose; and that purpose shall be carried out, though I wait long for it."

Then Mr. Cantilupe went up-stairs to find Diego.

Entering the room after repeated tappings (for the Duca was as scrupulous about disturbing the private moments of his servants

as they could be about his), a strange sight met his view; though to Mr. Cantilupe, who knew the habits of Diego, the exhibition afforded no surprise.

The dwarf was seated on the waxed floor, surrounded with crockery and earthenware. An ancient kettle, such as gipsies might use, formed the centre-piece to the motley assemblage. It was filled to the brim with coins of all nations—some of the cups were full of gold, some of silver; whilst others were emptied of the money, which lay in little heaps on the floor.

Diego had been at his old game; he was richer than he had thought.

He had been enjoying a "field-day" amongst the sovereigns. In fact, he went in for some sort of military manœuvres in this oft-repeated pastime; for he would spend the first hour in marshalling the coins into rank and file, and then arranging them into squadrons. He had

a grim sort of humour of his own: the attacking party always consisted of the sovereigns, the defensive of the smaller coins. He would build up strong fortifications of the silver metal, and then commence the attack by taking aim with the gold. So he would continue, till down came the great ramparts, and sovereigns and crowns lay in helpless disorder on the supposed battle-field.

Then he would pick each one up separately, chuckling long and low, and hold each piece in his hand, and rub the coins with a piece of chamois leather kept for the purpose.

Nay, he would go further; he would place them to his lips, and even murmur inarticulate expressions of tenderness over them, always ending up with—"The pretty pieces! the pretty pieces, that distance all the world! Give *me* the pieces! Let me live and die clutching hold of the pretty pieces!"

"Well, Diego," said Mr. Cantilupe, stroking his moustache reflectively; "the pieces are accumulating, what will you do with them when you return to the universal dust-bin?"

"Take them along with me, master. I could not sleep well without them. I want to have them round me like a shroud. I've not enough to cover me yet — to cover me thickly."

"How gets on the political jargon, Diego?" said Mr. Cantilupe, playfully taking up a coin and aiming at the kettle.

All the terribly earnest movements of this man's life—all his ugliest deeds—were carried out "playfully." Is it not old Horace who says, "Joking decides great things; stronger and better oft than earnest can?"

"Do you understand the easy little lesson I set you?"

"I could set a flame to Ireland to-morrow,"

said the dwarf, stretching out his hand. "I could set Paddy mad. I've got hold of the right strings, misshapen though I be."

"Diego, you are a clever fellow. Your spirit laughs at your body. You shall sow the ground with sovereigns; bear one thing in mind—*instigation* is a harmless amusement. In this world a more pleasing pastime could hardly be found. *Whisper*, and watch for the result. Every *whisper* brings about a *birth*. A motley crew of deeds we will allow; nobody knows their parentage. We must take care of your little neck, tho', Diego; I like it well. It's the only neck I have to care for now. One must cherish an affection for *somebody*, or one grows so *inhuman*, and that's a sure way to lose caste."

"Is the Missy going to be married?" said the dwarf, looking up quickly, his small keen eyes scanning Mr. Cantilupe's features.

Mr. Cantilupe did not reply for several seconds, but picked up another and yet another coin, and aimed again and again at the kettle; his thin lips were curved in a smile—the smile that Diego had learned so well to decipher.

"Charming old kettle," he said at last, speaking slowly. "See how it receives the impression of the coin—indentations, indentations, nothing but indentations! Some women are as easily impressed for good or evil as this pacific and civilized creation in brass. Miss Beauchamp in no way resembles your kettle."

"So the Missy *is* going to be married?" said Diego; but this time he did *not* look at Mr. Cantilupe, but down on the ground.

"Come, Diego, don't be so direct in your questions; did I not tell you I would yet charge my bride in the red wine, out of Cleopatra's goblet? These direct questions of yours

are *not* civilized—to be direct has a trace of savagery. I thought I had trained you better."

Then he chucked the dwarf under the chin, and said—

"Pull you the strings when the moment is ripe. Meantime here is another little bag of toys; and, once more, don't forget *instigation* is a harmless amusement which never gets a man swung too high; 'tis a subtle thing, only comprehended of the subtle; it does the world's work, though it has kindled the flames for martyrs, and brought down revolutions. Remember that. Ah! Diego, you will be among goodly company."

CHAPTER XI.

SUBTLETY.

"*A poetic anatomist in our own day teaches that a snake, being a horizontal line, and man, being an erect line, constitute a right angle; and between the lines of this mystical quadrant all animated beings find their place.*"

That afternoon Mr. Cantilupe and Miss Beauchamp had an interview so long, that Mrs. Battle thought the deadly serpent must surely have stung Diana, and she would die of the hurt.

So long, that she even pressed her ear against the door, excusing herself with the thought that she had heard Miss Beauchamp say Napoleon had done so; and if this were

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so, surely she might, for *her* motives were honest, whatever *his* might have been.

A little logic went a long way with Mrs. Battle, and even if it happened to be logic upside down, she was not likely to discover it.

The murmuring of voices was all she heard, and the even flow of those murmurings suggested no emotional interview, no dramatic incidents.

"Heightened voices always go with honest rage," she thought; "the true passion is, maybe, loud and vulgar, but it's not dangerous; this murmuring on his part, I like it not."

"I know *all* about it, Miss Beauchamp," Mr. Cantilupe had said, as he advanced to meet her, and playfully pressed her back on the couch, from which she had half risen as he entered the drawing-room. "Yes, I know all about it; and now, what would you have me say? Offer you my warmest congratula-

tions, and tell you that you will be far happier as Lady Panmure than as the artiste, Miss Beauchamp?"

He had placed himself on the couch beside her; but he did not look at her, his glance was bent on the carpet.

"Then I have nothing to tell you," said Diana; "I mean, nothing you do not know. But I wish to say, that if you find it in the least inconvenient, I can carry on the recitations. Sir Blaise has set me at rest about his feeling in the matter."

"*Happy* Sir Baise," said Mr. Cantilupe; "if I feel the least bit envious, Miss Beauchamp will think I am but a human, fallible, erring man who needs much absolution."

"You are wedded to the sciences, Mr. Cantilupe," said Diana hurriedly.

"Don't make me out an abnormal person," said Mr. Cantilupe, still playfully; "it is

quite true I am not like most people; but I have a human touch somewhere — at least, I have discovered that there is not the immeasurable distance between myself and other men I had thought. The discovery has been an unhappy one. I am very unhappy. Men, as a rule, will not avow their unhappiness; but when I feel that your sympathy would help me, can I resist asking you to feel for me?"

He paused — and Diana murmured, "You have always been so generous to me, I don't know how to thank you enough."

"You see, you could only thank me in *one* way," said Mr. Cantilupe, shaking off the dejection of a moment ago; "and that way is not to be. The only possession I have ever coveted to an extent, I may say, without bounds, is evidently unattainable."

Colouring slightly, Diana dared to give

vent to her belief that she had been right in her surmises. If Mr. Cantilupe were disappointed, it was only because he had failed to acquire some human *bric-à-brac* he chose to account as *ultra rare.*

"You have such costly surroundings," she said. "*No one* has such a collection of *curios—no one.*"

"I see what you mean, Miss Beauchamp," he said, in a half-bantering tone. "Very ingenious—very. I see what you mean. But I am not going to defend myself. If it pleases you to think I cannot pipe and hymn after the fashion of the human race, that I am beyond the reach of that often poisoned arrow which inflicts such deadly hurt on its victims—well, well, you shall think so. It would be unbecoming in me to speak to the affianced bride of another of my capabilities, both to love and to suffer; besides, while such

a suspicion as escaped you just now has been bearing all kinds of blossoms, it would be useless."

Mr. Cantilupe's manner had drifted again. His tone was cold, almost severe. He had affected Diana exactly as he desired.

She leaned forward, and said, with real feeling,

"I cannot bear to seem ungrateful to *you*, of all people in the world. But what can I say?"

"What, indeed?" he said, resuming his bantering tone. "Tell me to look out for another Diana. Tell me I shall find a hundred more rare than she. Tell me to *forget*, or to *remember* to *forget*. Tell me there are more faces of the Burne-Jones type in the world than *one;* more forms moulded after the Grecian type, than *one*. Tell me anything and everything. And when you

have said all this, say it all over again and again, and leave me just where you found me.

"Such is love."

"Reason may well hate love. Love has no logic. What can well-equipped and admirably versed reason have in common with this wild sentiment, with its extravagance and its freaks? What? Don't answer me, how can you? I should dread to hear those lips of yours frame the pretty speeches women are prone to make to us unhappy men, when they *will* or *can* 'have none of us.' The claptrap, colourless insipidities which spring uppermost, the hackneyed phraseology of the young lady who has come through this sort of thing so often—no, no!

"Besides, you have nothing to answer. What have I said? Have I ventured further than I should? I think even Sir Blaise could hardly find fault with me."

"Sir Blaise would feel as I feel about it all," said Diana, half to herself.

"Ah! that's how it should be," said Mr. Cantilupe. "Sentiments shared in common. The *we* and the *us* in full and perfect working order. Why should such bliss be denied to me? I vow I could appreciate the full flavour of this description of thing, though I am such a *bric-à-brac* hunter, such an abnormal person."

"I hope yet, Mr. Cantilupe, you will find——"

"Miss Beauchamp, I protest; you shall not vex me with that mocking hope. I shall demand backshish. Come, you see I am in high good-humour, notwithstanding the nature of our *tête-à-tête*. I have some claim on you. I need hardly crave your forbearance."

"You have a great claim on me," Diana

said impulsively. "I am full of faults, but I am not ungrateful. It shall never be said by you that I am ungrateful."

Mr. Cantilupe rose and went to the window. He stood looking out on the narrow, wind-swept street for several seconds; then he crossed the room, and stood before Diana.

"If you had never seen Sir Blaise, *would* you, *could* you have loved me?" He had modulated his voice almost to a whisper, yet there was a dramatic simplicity (if such a paradox is permissible) in the manner of his query, which impelled some sort of answer.

Several seconds elapsed in silence; Diana paled, then reddened.

The great tub of orange-blossoms, which was planted in one corner of the room, sighed in a languor of seductive fragrance. Why do flowers at some moments fill the air to intoxication

with their one form of *language*, and at others remain silent?

The macaw gave way to his one and only sentence, "Where is the parson?" A canary, hanging between two flowering baskets depending from the ceiling, burst into a sudden ecstasy of song.

Flowers and birds were at ease; and Diana, who could have thrown off this *mal à propos* question with happiest *insouciance* if she would, remained in the utmost discomfort; because she held this man in such high estimation that she could not bear to answer him with a displeasing *No*.

Mr. Cantilupe saw the great discomfort into which he had plunged Diana—saw and rejoiced. She would not throw off his question like a Season young lady, who, having curtsied at her first Drawing Room and come through her first campaign, is already a practised hand at

the gentle art of "fencing." *No*, Diana was as true as *Nature;* for is not Nature awfully true, whether in her fierce rage or her prolific love? She has no treachery that she does not make you perfectly cognisant of. She is not civilized, like her offspring—human nature. Mankind, after all, can but pay court to her. He can plant his seed, and hoe up the fallow ground, and do his best to cultivate her; but he is at her mercy; for wind and rain may make a mock of him.

Mr. Cantilupe left Diana just as long as he pleased, turning about that ugly word *No*, with its uncompromising aspect, which, do our best, we can't dress up into anything but an awkward and *malhonnête* little syllable, which should have no place in our elegant vocabulary.

He saw the exact moment at which the frightful little word "No" was about to precipitate itself from her lips. He divined and

waved her answer back to the regions where unfinished thoughts and unspoken words remain crowded together in the mental studio, which every human being possesses,—a studio more interesting than any artist's. For here are formed the deeds that make us great or little; here spring into birth the thoughts which, when acted out, shall form the drama or the tragedy of our lives.

"My question was ungenerous—unfair, the question of a schoolboy—of a tart-consuming, plum-pudding-eating schoolboy. It was a question for which I shall require much absolving; it sprang from me impulsively. Look upon it as unspoken," he said, hurrying his words before him as if he had no control over them; his attitude one of entreaty—head bent, shoulders slightly drawn together, hands clasped.

Diana's expression shifted from embarrass-

ment to a great relief; this also he noted. He had only added a little more gratitude to the already heavy bill she owed him.

"When is the wedding to be? You must allow me to give you away. This is the only request I have to make. Is it *granted?*"

Diana's eyes sought the ground. She felt painfully this heaped-up magnanimity. How wrong Mrs. Battle had been in her base suggestions. This mystic man, with his readiness for self-immolation, was sublime.

"Is my request granted?" he said, bending towards her as she still sat in silence.

"How can you doubt it?" she answered, and her admiration for his generosity gave impetus to her tone.

Mr. Cantilupe's lips parted in the smile with which he had smiled at Lord B——; a pregnant smile. But Diana saw nothing of all this—she was thinking what nobility is sown

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broadcast about the world — even where you might least expect it.

"We will have one farewell recitation at the Cosmos," he said. "Miss Beauchamp shall blaze forth like a comet in the intellectual skies. And you have emboldened me to ask yet one more favour. I should like you to wear the dress you first appeared in — the dress you told me you bought at a *festa* in some Etrurian village; the Roman belt, with its flashing gems encircling your waist. Sir Blaise will surely not grudge me these requests."

"Sir Blaise shares my sentiments for you, Mr. Cantilupe," said Diana eagerly. "He knows how your considerate care has smoothed away all the disagreeables of public life; he knows how you guarded me in my then isolated position from all unpleasantness."

"I suppose Sir Blaise will take you to

Ireland with him, two months hence?" said Mr. Cantilupe meditatively. "These are your plans."

"Who told you?" said Diana, in her surprise meeting Mr. Cantilupe's eyes, which she had avoided before; conscious that, however generous he might be, her ambition had greatly aggravated the unhappiness he evidently felt.

Mr. Cantilupe was silent for long.

At last he said — "Love will outrun the fleetest messenger that ever winged his way with his bag of information strapped about his shoulders. But I must not mention the word love in your presence; I vow myself to platonism. I suppose you will spend a few months in each year at the Isle of Saints, as we call Ireland, and the rest at Whitefriars; but plans that lovers make lose half their charm if discussed boldly by other lips.

"Now, good-bye; I must return to my

lonely study—the study in which Miss Beauchamp has recited 'Rizpah.' I must get out of my body to think."

Raising Diana's hand to his lips with the grace which never, under any circumstances, deserted him, Mr. Cantilupe bowed, and left.

No sooner had the hall-door shut, than Mrs. Battle came panting into the room, with an expression of blended curiosity and fear in her countenance.

"Ah! Mrs. Battle," said Diana, regarding her half sorrowfully, "how ignorant we are of each other! Mr. Cantilupe has been well tested; he has been passed through a sieve, and nothing but pure gold have I shaken out. He is kindness itself. He has made but two requests—one that he gives me away, the other that I wear that dress threaded with silver, on my last appearance at the Cosmos."

Even Mrs. Battle sat down, and was silent.

"We all have our good points," she said at last. "Mr. Cantilupe is not all poison; I suppose there is only a *trace* of *arsenic*. The serpent has a deal of wisdom. I've studied their peculiarities at the Zoo."

* * * * *

If she could have studied Mr. Cantilupe's eyes, as, staring fixedly before him, he was at that moment walking towards Bond Street, and meditating, she would have rushed off to the Zoo for a further investigation of that most subtle "beast of the field." Of what were his eyes full? *Triumph?* Surely of vengeance. What!

CHAPTER XII.

EGYPT.

"It makes a great difference to the force of any sentence, whether there be a man behind it or no."

MEANTIME the days sped on for Diana with such a radiancy on the hours, that she often found herself musing how she had existed at all before she had met Sir Blaise.

To find herself suddenly surrounded with every sweet alluring attention and care which the most perfect foresight could desire — the exquisite outcome of a nature at once so manly and so gentle as his—sometimes she would retire to her room, and leaning her head on

her hands, think of it all with a joy that was almost pain.

And then a mute cry would escape her, to be kept from isolating herself from human beings altogether, in the knowledge that she had attained all that she could possibly wish or desire on earth. Yes, the world seemed to contain but *one* man—Blaise; and it seemed as if it never had contained but one man—Blaise.

It was this consciousness that made her take herself to task, sometimes severely; for was not this the narrowness of an exclusive love which had swept her heart clean, and tenanted every chamber?

"So few get *all* they want. I have. I have all the more need, therefore, for watchfulness," she would say to herself at these moments of inward reflection.

One afternoon, shortly before their marriage,

Diana was sitting with Sir Blaise, when she said suddenly—

"I saw Francisca Masters yesterday, and she is in great trouble. Major Clintock is under orders for Egypt, and starts in the 'Serapis' next week, and she begs me to go with her to Portsmouth to see him off. Her marriage will not take place till his return; she says I shall be some support to her when she watches the trooper off. Felicia Novello is in Italy, and her own people have not the rallying powers required for such a trying moment, though Lady Masters will accompany her. What shall I do?"

"Go, by all means," said Sir Blaise. "I know what a comfort you will be."

"How thankful I am it's not you, Blaise," said Diana, flinging her arms round his neck. "I could not let you go; I should die of grief. Do you know, one evening, when I was

staying with the Masters at Deneclose, I felt as if I should have a great trouble some day, and I held up my hands to God, begging Him to avert it. But no answer seemed to come—rather a stillness, as if I should have to pass through it. I suppose we all have presentiments now and then—not that I am superstitious; but promise me, Blaise, that you will take me with you wherever you go—promise me at all costs."

"This is what comes of being imaginative," said Sir Blaise fondly. "When you are my wife, Di, I shall people your life with such real living facts that you will have no time to dream dreams."

"Promise me, Blaise."

"Promise what?" said Sir Blaise, laughing.

"That you will go nowhere without me; then, if anything happens, it will happen to us together."

"It's not very likely I shall find much pleasure in going about by myself, when I can take you with me, Di. Why, I never enjoy anything now without you, and I hope matrimony won't tone down my sentiments."

"I *hope* not, Blaise."

Then they both laughed like a boy and girl at their modest hope, laughing for pure joy.

Each day drew them nearer to each other; for who can deny that love must grow? There is no standing still in Nature or human nature; we are adding to or taking from whatever we possess, mentally, or morally, or spiritually; each moment something lost or found to increase our store.

If to outsiders Sir Blaise was charming, not only in person, but in the higher attributes which raise one man some inches above another, and make one feel that in the nature and aspirations of the man there is something

infinitely high yet lovable, what was the effect of a close intercourse with such a nature to Diana, who shared already his nearest and most cherished thoughts, and possessed in its entirety his earthly love ?

No wonder, again and again, each day she repeated to herself how blest she was—how blest beyond her deserts.

"Blaise, we have not had a quarrel yet," said Diana; "let us just have one little quarrel, to be like other people. Let us squabble like the two old men who lived in the cell."

"Very well," said Sir Blaise; "I will begin, if you will tell me how those old men squabbled."

"The first old man said, 'Here, I will put a brick between us, and say that it is mine, and you shall say that it is not mine, and over that let us have a contention and a squabble.'

But when they put the brick between them, and one said, 'It is mine,' the other said, 'I hope it is mine'; and when the first said, 'It is mine, it is not yours,' he answered, 'If it is yours, take it.' So they could not find out how to quarrel after all."

"That's how it will be with us," said Sir Blaise; "when the brick is stuck up between us, we shan't know how to quarrel about it."

"We will never grow prosy, Blaise. How husbands and wives snap at each other, as a rule! One feels quite sure that if they did not happen to be married, they would not remain together. It seems very dreadful to say so; but, of course, I am talking of the bulk of married couples."

Sir Blaise took Diana's face between his hands, and regarded it long and fixedly. There was worship in the look, you might have said:

through all the years some faint reflection of such worship will yet be found.

Diana paled, and said—

"Blaise, I'm thankful you have no relations; no one who can interfere between us, and make mischief and destroy our bliss. I'm glad—yes, glad, that you can't introduce me to those generations Mrs. Battle loves to thread. Nobody who dare to come up to you with the familiarity of close kinship, and say, 'Miss Beauchamp is this or that.' Oh, I'm glad—downright glad."

"Why, Di, suppose they had," Sir Blaise said, laughing; "I should have said, 'My very good people, you are adding fuel to my love; pray keep your remarks to yourselves; I need no more fuel.' My orthodox garb (which you say makes me seem so unapproachable) would not have hindered me from '*rounding*' on them, and making them look rather foolish."

Then Sir Blaise looked again at Diana, and perhaps the fondness of his look had deepened.

"I'm glad all the same, Blaise. To begin with, you never liked the recitations, and they could have worked on that; and then I led a very independent life in Italy, all by myself, and they could have worked on that; and then I've a great many flagrant faults, and they could have worked on that."

"Poor things!" said Sir Blaise, who was laughing; "what a fearful amount of work they would have had to do, and all to end in sending me to your feet; for really, Di, I used to think a fellow who went down on his knees before anybody, must be a very æsthetical fellow, given to walking in jerks and moving in the manner of that school; but I think they would have worked me up to that pitch at last. How absurd I should have looked! and I should have made my mother, father, brothers,

sisters, aunt, grandmother, grandfather, and distant cousins, as Mrs. Battle says, all come and look at me too. Now, are you still glad?"

"Yes, Blaise, still glad." But Diana was as red as the red rose which Sir Blaise had put in her belt.

Then with the varying charm which made his face so interesting a study, he continued—

"Do you know, Di, some time ago, before all this had come to pass between us, but when I knew I loved you, I was sitting in the library at Whitefriars—in the window-sill where *you* sat, sweet Di, on that memorable afternoon when Francisca Masters brought you over, and a glorious rainbow spanned the heavens —and straight into its very midst flew a pair of doves; I thought, 'Diana and I will mount as fearlessly into the glorious lights as these emblematical birds, and let the reflected

rays from His presence beautify our daily lives.'"

"I shall *never* be like you, Blaise," said Diana; "but I have always had yearnings after God. Nature taught me to love God first of all. I thought how beautiful the thoughts of God must be when I looked out on lovely scenery, and read this living poem; but I never loved God in a human being till I met you."

"Don't look at me, Di," said Sir Blaise, a contraction of pain crossing his brow. "I feel as if a life spent in the very dust cannot atone for the years I have wasted. I can quite understand the monks and hermits and friars fleeing into the wilderness to escape from Sin. The course is one hard fight."

"I will be a hermitess, if you turn a hermit," said Diana.

"Di, we will spend our time to some

purpose," said Sir Blaise, throwing back his head, and his whole countenance lighting up with the glow of the enthusiasm which animated him. "We know but little of the future state, but we know a great deal about the present. It's a time of sowing—we will sow, and one day together, darling Di (always together), we will share our true harvesting."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "SERAPIS."

"Love is compatible with universal wisdom."

"The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him;
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him;
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him;
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him;
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it cannot fail."

"I KNEW you would come," said Francisca, as she greeted Diana at the Portsmouth Station; "I knew I could count on your sympathy. As for Sir Blaise, he was always the most unselfish man living. Besides, you are going so soon now to spend your lives together, while I——"

Francisca's eyes absolutely filled with tears as they trundled along in the fly which was to take them to the Q—— Hotel, at Southsea, where Lady Masters was staying.

"The 'Serapis' starts to-morrow at six o'clock," continued Francisca, "and, of course, Clintock is in the highest spirits. Why *do* men like fighting? I am sure they never look so delighted as when a fight is going on. I *wish* I was a man: for them, all the action of life; for us, all the passive sitting down; for *us* all the tears, for *them* all the smiles. Look at my eyes—that is, if you can see them—how I have wept. And Clintock only laughs and says, 'High-art eyes—varieties, and very too-too.'"

"That's the way he keeps you up," said Diana.

"Men can't suffer," continued Francisca;

"it's not *in* them to suffer. Emerson talks of 'brute youth'; Clintock has not this excuse. I am always puzzling out these life problems. I wish I could be like other people, and take everything I see and hear as a matter of course. Here is Clintock," said Francisca, suddenly poking her head out of the window and waving; "he has just been down to the Docks."

Major Clintock now joined them, and Francisca's complainings were silenced for the moment.

"The poor little woman is in an awful state of mind," he said, looking delightedly at Francisca. "But now you have come, Miss Beauchamp, you will soon put her all right, don't you know."

"Another of mankind's delusions," said Francisca. "Everybody is put all right *de suite*."

"You are so awfully clever," continued Clintock, addressing his conversation to Diana and his glances at Francisca. "I put my foot into it. She wants me to go about in a very melancholy style, and, upon my word, I can't, don't you know. I've a chance of distinguishing myself. I fluked a V.C. in the last little war."

"How dreadful war is!" said Diana.

She felt she could only sympathize in melancholy fashion, for she threw herself into Francisca's place and thought.

"Oh! if it were Blaise. Surely to love passionately is not a gain—few can. For those few a very crucible of suffering is often in store. For a higher love is claiming them, and there is the danger of being so perfectly satisfied with the lower that the soul's training is hindered. 'Tis mostly these passionate natures that get the scourging in this world."

"Dreadful, but necessary," said Clintock decidedly. "We shall have more and more war, I suppose, till the end comes; the parsons tell us so."

"You shall leave the army directly you return from Egypt," said Francisca.

"Poor little woman," said Clintock, tugging his moustache, and looking more and more triumphant; "she really is dreadfully cut up —most awfully cut up; and she did not care a bit for me till I was under orders, don't you know, Miss Beauchamp."

"How can you say such things," said Francisca, colouring furiously.

"*That's* in the constitution of things, if you like," said Clintock.

"You are getting spoilt," said Francisca; "a very little attention goes to your head; you were in capital discipline a short time ago. I sha'n't cry any more; I believe the

war will be all over before the 'Serapis' gets out. It has just flashed upon me. Sir Garnet will strike one tremendous blow, and the Egyptians will throw down their arms."

At this Major Clintock looked so truly disconsolate, that both Diana and Francisca burst out laughing.

"You will come steaming back as you went," said Francisca.

Nevertheless, when from the Southsea Pier on the following evening they watched the trooper, which was bearing Major Clintock to the East, come sailing along like a beautiful white swan, its deck sown with red like a field of poppies, and heard the strains of "Auld Lang Syne," Francisca's tears flowed freely; and not all the enthusiasm, as cheer upon cheer broke from the assembled crowds, and answered back from the "Serapis," could drown her sorrow in sentiment.

It was a graceful, beautiful sight, the stately ship bearing our brave men to that land so full of interest; carrying the British flag where the children of Israel had cried out against their task-masters; and Diana felt strangely stirred as she waved her handkerchief, and watched till the "Serapis" was but a dim white spot on the ocean.

"You will keep the little woman up," had been Clintock's last words to Diana, and Diana had promised to do her best.

So that evening, when Francisca said, "Do have some sanctuary intercourse," she had said, "Say on."

"It's not about Sir Blaise I have come to talk," Francisca said, twisting her hair about her shoulders; for she had come into Diana's room as she had on that evening at her own home some time ago, when she had discoursed on her prospects; "it's about Mr. Cantilupe.

You know he *is* a Duca; but if a man won't own a title because he carries on a queer trade, I suppose he can do so.

"Diana, he is a strange man, and Felicia says, on the night of your farewell at the Cosmos Hall, he looked at you with some dreadful meaning in his face. As surely as one can see *love* in an expression, one can see *hate*.

"You know, Felicia left for Rome the next day; but she wrote me a long letter, and described the whole thing. She said—

"'Why do people draw characters in their books out of their heads, when they can have living people to come and sit to them every hour in the day?'

"Then she went on to describe the modern Diana standing up in the midst of the palm-trees on the lapis lazuli flooring, with her silver-threaded gown draped about her, and

the gem-set belt at her waist, and Sir Blaise standing in the doorway like a knight in mail (Felicia says she garbs everybody far more realistically in her imagination than in sober fact they appear), and looking at you as only Sir Blaise can look; and the Duca di Cantilupe, with his shadowy figure and old young face, leaning against the marble pillar which flanks one side of the staircase from which you ascend and descend to your stage, smiling as he bent his mystic glances on you, was a notable sight to be retained in the memory when much has vanished.

"You were reciting 'Evangeline' at the particular moment when Felicia, glancing from Sir Blaise to the Duca, felt herself carried along with the strong under-current of feeling which was in the air. Gabriel passes Evangeline in the boat, and she does not know it; and Felicia says she shall never forget the

intensity of expression, both in your face and voice, as with Longfellow you marvelled some angel had not breathed the passing of Gabriel into Evangeline's ear. You were wrapt and lost to the crowded audience, which in breathless silence was listening to this ever lovely idyllic poem; but all this is merely leading up to the question I want to ask. What does our Duca say about your marriage?"

"He is very kind about it all, simply because he is so unselfish."

Then Diana's brow contracted, and after a moment's pause, she added, "But I *don't* pretend to understand the race, for I have had so few friends. I know far more about Nature with her subtle manners, than human nature with its vagaries. Once I had an exaggerated fear of our race—this was when I lived in Italy—but lately have felt a universal love for it."

"We pass through so many stages," said Francisca musingly.

"One thing I know," continued Diana, "I am hugely indebted to Mr. Cantilupe (as I suppose we must still call him), and Sir Blaise likes him very much."

"Sir Blaise would not apprehend Mr. Cantilupe," said Francisca, shaking her head.

"You are as bad as Mrs. Battle," said Diana, "she is for ever frightening me about him; sometimes I think it is because he is so cultivated, that people less cultivated fear him. I can't make it out.

"Culture and cruelty are a combination to be dreaded, and Mr. Cantilupe impresses both Mrs. Battle and me after the same fashion."

"Don't have 'the Duca' to stay with you at Whitefriars, he will mesmerise you; he does mesmerise people—he is odd, he is like nobody else. Confess, Diana, your knowledge of life

is derived from no hand-to-hand dealing with the race. You have scaled the walls of friendship at a bound, but you have not climbed up the little narrow crooked steps one by one like other people, and found out what a fallacy, and what a hollow sham, encompass *most* friendships. The Duca is no friend to you now. *Friend!* He a friend? at no time a friend. Something else, if you will—something to which I suspect the love of other men, even poor Clintock's for me, looks a stunted blossom. I want to warn you. I vowed to Felicia I would warn you. Will you be warned?"

Once more, as on that evening when a foreboding of impending evil had attacked Diana, the same nerve vibration made itself felt. She leaned back amidst the cushions of the couch on which she was resting, and turned deadly pale.

Francisca rushed frantically to her side, pausing in her movements to deluge her handkerchief in *eau vinaigre* :—

"Why did I speak? How stupid, how owlish, I am!"

But Diana was half smiling again, and said,

"I don't know why your words frightened me. You surely cannot think that Mr. di Cantilupe would work me harm. Why, he is going to give me away; he has always seemed so kind, so generous!"

"I have been an owl to frighten you like this," said Francisca remorsefully, "a perfect owl. What harm, after all, can he do? These are not the days when people dare openly intrigue against you. If he does intrigue, he will do it smiling, not frowning; that's the style in which people intrigue now-a-days. He might make mischief between yourself and your

husband. The insinuations would be so smilingly carried out, that Sir Blaise would probably think he was joking—nothing more pronounced than that; but if we know anything of life, we learn this,—that half the wretchedness of life is caused by insinuations."

"Sir Blaise would never listen," said Diana proudly. "Sir Blaise would deeply resent——"

"It would be too cleverly done for Sir Blaise to perceive it. Diana, I have known your future husband all my life; so I may say that, for all his sagacity, he is absolutely blind to machinations, or intrigue, or finesse of this description."

"How is it you are so well versed in this description of thing?" said Diana, half severely, half wearedly.

"I matured rapidly, I suppose," said Fran-

cisca; "but I find that I am, generally speaking, right. Don't think I set up for being clever; it's not that. It's perhaps nothing more highly developed than—what shall we call it—'instinct'? I'm willing to share my sagacity with the 'canines,' if you will. Instinctively I fear this person, and trust that person. I am prepared to trust poor Clintock. I always call him poor Clintock, because I think he is much to be pitied in caring for me. I see over his little head, and *that's* what he likes, and I'm not sure whether *I* do or don't."

Diana was laughing now, and the colour had returned to her cheek.

"I like him when he says 'Don't you know'? and looks so helplessly about for his universal knowledge. At that moment he is the most likable mannikin in the world. Oh! Diana, you may laugh; you think me as

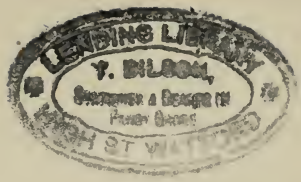
shallow as a river at low tide on a summer's day. What will you have? Have you not captured the hand that could have evoked, perhaps from even *poor me*, some deep chords. I shall 'tinkle' along—nothing more.

"Perhaps, by-and-by, Clintock and I shall change about, and he will see over my head, instead of me over his. Nothing more sensational than this will occur. You know, a woman always sinks to the level of her husband. I shall only become a 'don't you know' style of a person. I shall be quite as happy as all the rest of the 'don't you know' school of married couples, and I don't envy you in the very least, Diana, though my words sound as if I do. For, though, as I said before, *you* have captured the hand that might have struck deep chords in me—I *fear* those tense chords. I am almost ready, sometimes, to throw up my hands and thank God that I've escaped them; that

I shall be humdrum—placid—that my pulse will never stir—my senses quicken—my nerves vibrate; that for me there can never be those great crisis moments when one's very life seems to hang on a word, on a look, on a touch; when one life is lost, nay, submerged in another, and only lives in the life of that other. The alternations of hope and fear—the wild joy, the craven fear,—some people, for one such moment, would endure a whole lifetime of pale days; they have touched with their lips the maddest, gladdest pulse of life; and it will leave them, *not* as it found them. On to the end they will carry the reflection of *such* moments, somewhere; like the scent of a flower, it will cling about their garments; or, like the bite of an adder, you may perceive its mark. Yes, I can throw up glad hands, and can selfishly cry, I've escaped the tense chords of life."

Diana's eyes had darkened as Francisca's

words flew from her lips, and found their place in her heart; she hid her face in the cushion. She could not answer Francisca, for her feet had touched this strange shore, and her soul was lapped in silence.



CHAPTER XIV.

A WHISPER'S FRUIT.

"The song the wondrous chant of the grey-brown bird,
And the tallying chant the echo arous'd in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star, with the countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand, nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine, and I in the midst, and their memory ever I keep for the dead I loved so well;
For the sweetest wisest soul of all my days and lands,—and this for his dead sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim."

Two months had passed since the very simple ceremony which had been performed by Father Venables at St. Veronica's had merged Miss Beauchamp in Lady Panmure—two perfect months—as we count perfection here.

Sir Blaise had touched the fine issues of Diana's being, and she had drunk that satisfying draught which is the portion of the few; she had tasted the one great human love which so fills the entire being that the whole nature blossoms out—'tis the mystic touch which wakens a note as wild and sweet as any swallow's—'tis a song of ascension.

The pleased contentment of the ordinary hundreds and thousands of newly-wedded couples with the ordinance which keeps the world "agoing," was as different to *their* happiness as Mrs. Jackson's pleasure in finding herself possessed of a bunch of keys and a staff of servants, a hoop of gold and a protector, is to the joy with which a *soul* finds another soul to comprehend its virtues and its failings, its yearnings and aspirations,—a soul which translates all its unspoken thoughts into the language it has dreamed of, but never till now awoke to

find mingling in every detail of life, and making the most commonplace duty eloquent with a hundred tongues.

In the mythological world, one would imagine Venus sitting on her throne, and passing before her the various votaries who wished to be initiated into the rites of the Court of Hymen. As each one bends before her, she throws down a golden coin and rings the changes. With a smile of disdain she waves this one and that from her presence. "Counterfeit! counterfeit!" she cries; "only the coin that will ring through the ages can open the gates of *my* kingdom."

In the world of *Fact*, we can imagine much such a scene. Of love, with its self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, and faithfulness in storm and sunshine, through change and chance, how few can pass and yet ring out the same glad note of the coin which the Mint approves.

Passion, like a summer's day, may glance across the landscape of a life, and, with intoxicating whisper, make a garden of a wilderness in a night; but to-morrow you shall find the flowers that it bore all withered and gone, the herbage scorched and blasted, the birds which had sung in the beautiful bowers sprung up at its touch, all fled, and no voice left to tell the tale of its blighting hand but the silent records of a forgotten grave, or the scarred and sorrow-haunted life which it has left to inhabit the wilderness it made.

For Diana, love had come in its most perfect form. In Sir Blaise, she found at once the tenderness of a woman united to the strength of a man. Rare combination! Yet manliness, in its truest, deepest sense, seems *never* to be reached till the two apparently opposing forces are combined. Has not the ideal man this marvellous blending?

Monklees, where the Panmures had been staying since their marriage, was one of Sir Blaise's properties a few miles out of Dublin. And on the next day they were to return to London, where Sir Blaise purposed spending a year, before returning to Whitefriars, and officiating in his own chapel, which was then to be thrown open to the public.

It was a dull afternoon. Autumn had crept stealthily into the heart of summer, and given its own blighting kiss to trees and flowers—whispering of death and change.

There was to be a meeting between landlords and tenants in Dublin, on this the last day of the Panmures' stay in Ireland, and Sir Blaise was to attend it.

"I *wish* you would not go, Blaise," Diana had said. The only rift in her lute during these two happy months had been the dread of anything happening to her husband.

"The most popular landlord in Ireland, Di," Sir Blaise had said, laughing. He was not troubled with any fears. But Diana whitened visibly, and in a moment he said—

"I will go into the subject of selling over the properties to Government, and then your fears will all vanish. Anything better than causing you a minute's pain. You are too precious, and life is too short."

The colour came back to Diana's cheek, and, as he handed her into the landau shortly after, she said, "You have made me at rest, Blaise; these properties have been my only trouble."

"You will have to look about for a grievance, Di," said he, laughing, as he took his seat beside her; and they were bowled along at an exhilarating pace down the long straight road which led from Monklees into Dublin.

"Autumn used to make me sad, Blaise," she had said as he wrapped the bear-skin rug more tenderly about her. "Now, do you know, I absolutely enjoy the wild whistle of the wind as it hurries the leaves down from the trees, and laughs at their timid expostulations, as they cling to the belief in their decorating beauty still."

And his answer had been a look and a tightening of the hand which Diana had poked into his, with her usual remark, "Nobody sees."

The meeting was a crowded one. All Dublin seemed out. This burning question of landlord and tenant was under discussion, not only in public halls, but at the corners of the streets and at every dinner-table.

"I don't care how long I wait," Diana had said, as they drew up at the entrance of St. Patrick's Hall.

"Would it not be better to take a drive, and fetch me an hour hence?" Sir Blaise said; and then he added meditatively, "I hope I shall speak to the point."

He was standing with his hand on the door of the carriage, looking half abstractedly at Diana; the next moment he had fallen forward on the pavement shot through the heart!

* * * * *

Of the indescribable confusion which followed, no words could convey any adequate description.

Diana, at the report of the pistol, had started up with one long terrible cry, and had thrown herself out of the carriage on the prostrate body of Sir Blaise. When tender hands lifted her up, she was mercifully unconscious.

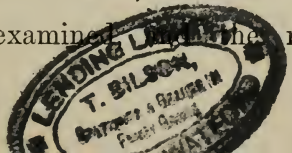
Meantime, the murderer or murderers of Sir Blaise were tracked in all directions; but, as usual, no trace could be found.

How such deeds can be done in broad daylight, and the perpetrators escape, seems one of the enigmas left to solve with other enigmas.

Some declared they had seen a car drive furiously up to the Hall with four suspicious-looking men on it, and they had observed them talking earnestly to each other, and pointing in the direction of the Panmures' carriage, which, with its magnificent bays and perfect appointments, was provocative of attention amidst the ramshackle conveyances which are mostly seen in Dublin.

Others vowed they had observed a man with a slouch hat and a long cloak, such as the priests wear, standing at the corner of the street, and looking attentively at Sir Blaise as he stood talking to Lady Panmure.

But amidst all the evidence adduced of one sort and another, and the various people who were examined [illegible] numerous steamers



which were ransacked as they put into various ports, *no* truth as to the *real* murderer of Sir Blaise was come at.

The perpetrator of the foul deed remained hidden in mystery.

CHAPTER XV.

WANDERINGS.

"Earth's joys are but a dream, its destiny
Is but decay and death. Its fairest form,
Sunshine and shadow mixed. Its brightest day,
A rainbow braided on the wreaths of storm."

"Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea winds, along Pawmanck's shore;
I wait, and I wait, till you blow my mate to me."

When a great sorrow comes, surely the best gift God can give is death or unconsciousness. There *is* heroism in fighting a life-sorrow; but if even the Holy Jesu requested that if it were possible this cup might pass from Him, is it to be wondered at if the riven heart of poor humanity cries out for deliverance from

its anguish in one or other of these forms? For Diana came this blest unconsciousness.

Mrs. Battle (who had been telegraphed for) stood by her bedside for weeks, and listened to her wanderings with a riven heart.

"My lamb! my lamb! if I could have spared you the shock of returning consciousness," she repeated over and over again to herself, as she hung over Diana's pillow, with her eyes full of tears. "When you wake up to find you have lost Sir Blaise, what *will* you do! What *will* become of you!"

Meanwhile, Diana lay babbling of her love and of her joy. Blaise and she were at Whitefriars; they were standing together in the hall, and looking at the portrait of Hortense di Cantilupe.

"Just such an expression between the eyebrow and eyelid as you have, Di," Sir Blaise was saying.

"No, no, Blaise; she was so unhappy, and I am so happy. She never married Sir Sholto; she died when he was laid on his bed of ashes. Who says she wanders about our grounds crying, 'Sholto! Sholto!' Oh, Blaise! I'm not like her; I'm so happy! I'm your wife."

"'Too happy,' did you say?"

"Too happy for it to last; so happy, that I shall never care to die. Well, Blaise, I will never feel secure of my happiness; is that how it should be? I will think this joy must be taken from me; it must go, but not yet—not yet. My nest must be disturbed. . . . Come here, Blaise. Do you see those eagles teaching their young to soar? What! can't you see them? Give me your hand, and I will describe the scene; I can talk twice as well with your hand in mine. . . . What strong supple fingers you have, Blaise! What a human hand! Dear, kind hand, always ready to give, my own

Blaise. . . . But the eagles—oh! it was very long ago, I saw those eagles. Where was I? somewhere, I can't remember where; I've lost the name of the place. . . . Never mind, I will describe the scene.

"It was a bleak wild spot—a spot where no man dwelt—a spot given up to Nature. There were great towering rocks, all crimson and cloud capped; the jagged peaks stood out against a stormy sky; and at night they looked like giants sentinelling the sea, which was stretching far away with its strange grand lessons of God and His bounds. There were seagulls lying on the crested waves, and a great red sun shining down from a bank of clouds overhead.

"Suddenly, I heard a rush of wings, and far above I saw two eagles soaring upwards, bearing on their wings some almost invisible things. I looked more closely, and discovered

they were bearing their young on their wings. Now they dropped them, and the little eaglets essayed their own powers; and now the parent eagles swooped down and caught them up again on their strong swift pinions, and bore them up as it seemed to the very gate of Heaven.

"So, little by little, they gave them their first lesson. They had stirred up the nest and taught them to fly; that's like God, Blaise, you say. But I *will* not settle in my nest. I'm always dreading it may be stirred up. I will learn to soar without being taught." . .

And then Diana started up in bed, and threw up her arms. "*What was that? A pistol!* Some one fired! Don't you see the smoke? What noise is that? Blaise will tell me. . . . My Blaise is the most popular landlord in Ireland. *He* is safe." . . .

Mrs. Battle wrung her hands when Diana

approached the fearful tragedy, for she longed yet dreaded this returning consciousness. But Diana was babbling again, and this time it was of Beauchamp Court.

"Homespun, do you see the rabbits how they love me? . . . See, they don't move out of my path. There are no traps here. Did you say there were poachers about? What should poachers do at Beauchamp? . . . Blaise, come here; I want to whisper to you. I did not quite redeem Beauchamp—not quite. I loved you too well. I was proud and ambitious; but my love withered it all up. Love scorches; it either destroys or blesses; it's like the sun—it has two actions. . . . I always have done what I said; yet I did not quite redeem Beauchamp; but I married my bonnie Panmure. . . ."

Francisca says, "Hush!"

Then Diana laughed softly.

"It's the only secret I have kept from you," she says—"Blaise, Blaise, do you remember, the first day you called upon me you were riding Lurline, the white horse. Why does Death ride a white horse? I'm to ride Lurline. . . . Poor old Bess, I never could do anything with her; she had no paces. Blaise laughs at Bess. . . . My love, the scent of the turf in the autumn beneath the horses' feet is sweet. The leaves will be hurrying before us, and the whistling wind will try to make us sad as we scamper for miles over the bracken. But nothing can make *us* sad, for we are *together*, and so happy, my Blaise and I. . . . Who said autumn was sad—that the earth was big with her mournful cry as she gathers her fruits, and then sinks to sleep beneath her shroud? *Sad!* Each day is glad to me, for Blaise and I are together. . . ."

CHAPTER XVI.

REALIZATION.

"That time—O times!
I would not live alway."

"That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice;
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray;
These are the shadows of the leaves.
O, darkness! O in vain!
O! I am very sick and sorrowful!"—WALT WHITMAN.

"MRS. BATTLE"—the voice was Diana's own voice; not the strange, highly pitched, or mysteriously lowered voice of her unconsciousness.

"What has happened? Am I ill? Where is Sir Blaise?"

"You have been very ill—very, very ill, dear heart; and the doctor says you must not talk yet."

"But I am quite well," said Diana; "and I want to see Sir Blaise. Where is he? Blaise *not* be with me when I am ill! Oh, where is he?" Diana's voice was rising, and she was seated up in the bed, looking with widely-opened eyes at Mrs. Battle.

"Oh, where is he?" Diana reiterated piteously.

"Sir Blaise will be with you by-and-by," said Mrs. Battle soothingly; "he has been called away, dear heart."

"Mrs. Battle, tell me what it is—there is *something* wrong. Is Sir Blaise well? You say I have been ill."

"You have been very, very ill," said Mrs. Battle, clutching at anything to save her from

the awful disclosure, "and you must not talk; the doctor says so."

"When will my Blaise come and *see* me?" said Diana anxiously. "I think it so unlike him not to be with me when I have been so ill—*that's* not *my* Blaise, now is it, Mrs. Battle? Oh! I've had such dreams—such hideous dreams. I dreamed I was seeking for Blaise, all through the weary earth; I wandered on over marshes and waste spots; I sank in mire, and scrambled over mountains which frowned upon me. I wandered on, stretching out my arms and crying, 'Where is *my* Blaise?' But nobody made me any answer; not even Blaise. *Could* there ever come a day when Blaise would make me *no answer*—when I should *stretch out* my arms to clasp the empty air? Oh, save me from these dreams!"

"You have been very, very ill," reiterated

Mrs. Battle tremulously, and at her wits' end between fear of saying either too much or too little.

"But I am well now—quite well. Go and tell Blaise so, and bring him here; and *don't* say he has hurt me by his absence. But it's not like Blaise."

No, verily this silence of the dead was *not* like the tender touch of the living.

"To-morrow," said poor Mrs. Battle, not knowing what to say.

"*To-morrow*—not to-morrow," said Diana, jumping up with violence, "but to-day!" The damask silk of the baldacchino over her head cast a pale pink reflection on her colourless cheeks, and seemed for the moment to lend some of the old animation to her features. "Will you have me seek him myself?"

"Sir Blaise has been called away; but you

will see him soon," Mrs. Battle murmured soothingly.

"Nothing is soon but the present. You are keeping something back from me!" Then Diana commenced to sob and to wail out, "*Oh, tell me all!*"

Sinking on her knees, Mrs. Battle, for the first time, prayed a real prayer. When overwhelming trouble comes, each soul cries out to God. She called out for help to deal this blow to one who had but just returned from the brink of the shadowy land.

"You are praying," Diana wailed. "Something dreadful has happened. My Blaise prayed at all times. Tell me the worst." And once more she flung up her arms in the anguish of her fear, as she said, "But, O God, let it not be about Blaise. In my dreams I heard a pistol go off. In my dreams I saw my Blaise fall forward — shot! I've heard

shouts of fiendish laughter. My dreams are about me yet. Oh, tell me what is real and what is unreal!"

Then Mrs. Battle, with streaming eyes and a voice almost inaudible from emotion, said, "It is not *all* a dream. Some cruel earthly fiend has taken the life of Sir Blaize."

And this time no blest unconsciousness came to hide Diana from the awful truth. She had to enter into the mystery of suffering; she had to drink her cup of deadly wine alone. Human hands and human hearts, beat they never so kindly, or draw her to their side never so fondly, could not succour her. Their touches were external. In the inmost depths of her being she was *alone*.

Surely sorrow, the handmaid of Death, has learnt its *isolation* from its grim master. Yet to senses quickened, there might have been heard a rustle of angels' wings hovering about

Diana as she lay, and bearing a message of comfort, as they whispered that for her there was yet to be a new sweet link with time,—a link which would bind her more closely to the blessed dead, and in whose life she might live again.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHALL I?

"Doing is activity, and he will still be doing."

"Where's thy conscience now?"

"WELL, Diego, think you that I shall yet charge my bride in the red wine out of the amber goblet? How does Lady Panmure bear the loss of her husband?"

Mr. Cantilupe lingered over the utterance of the last word, and drew his thin lips together as if to taste the flavour of his hideous and accomplished purpose. He had been thwarted, and the thwarting had cost him instigation to a deadly deed. Diego had just returned from Ireland, where he had been

whispering and watching for the last two months.

"Lady Panmure lies unconscious," he said in his guttural tones. "I saw five doctors enter Monklees in consultation; and I made inquiries at the lodge, and the woman wailed after the manner of the Irish, and said, 'My lady is dying.'"

"That's the description of love I covet, Diego; few women are capable of a great love; they are slenderly constructed, I take it, in every way. The widow consoles herself with another husband a year hence. She is so stricken down with grief that she must bury her sorrow in the distractions of a new love. Like cures like.

"So Lady Panmure is likely to die of her grief? She will be an exception to her sex. Granted, though there are more ways than one of *dying;* and The Diana is excep-

tional—that is why she made herself desirable to me. I fear she will never console herself after the manner of other women, though Bombazine and Cupid agree remarkably well. Forgive me laughing, Diego. A little knowledge of life makes a man laugh—a great knowledge makes a man sneer; still the sneer must never show up. The more you know of life the greater your desire to hide your sneer in the Stoic's calm.

"You have done your work well, and you will be well paid. You are this day a rich man. You have only hissed in the ear of a disloyal and maddened people, and the hiss did the deed—not you. Ireland is saturated with the burning fluid of rebellion. A match is thrown down here and there, and nobody sees, or knows, or cares who throws it. Instigation is the soul of intrigue—intrigue is full of resources, versatile as tact itself. In-

trigue rarely gets found out. Our success in this instance has been won at the cost of a life; but Pouf! — to attain an object, you must have no dainty scruples.

"I have attained one end, I may lose the other. Diego, believe me, it is hardly likely that I shall charge my bride in the red wine. I think, though I went down on my knees before her, and entreated her to be mine, she is so alien to our bombazine widows and our easily consoled young ladies, that she would say with a tremble of the lip that I know, 'I am waiting to rejoin my husband.' She stole a ray from eternity, I think, when she loved Sir Blaise. Still, one day I will ask her. At any rate, the Alps are levelled; I can walk over a plateau to her."

"Master, what can you want with a wife when you can have the pieces?" said Diego, at last breaking silence and chuckling;

"the pretty pieces, which are our best friends."

Mr. Cantilupe laughed strangely.

"Look here, Diego. I'm a bad man; but at the root of my badness lies a desire to secure perfection. When I beheld The Diana, I desired her because she had the blended beauty of mind and body which masters me. As I said before, I'm a bad man; but not all bad, because I worship perfection. Yet is not this the worst desire that can afflict the human mind?

"My bride must be rare. I must look into her eyes, and read untranslatable regions of thought. Every gesture must be full of cultivated meaning. My bride must be rare, —rarer than the exotics which crowd our conservatories. You must say, What flower is this? From whence does it come? You will cavil at it, if you have no imagination,

or an imagination which cannot reach out farther than the length of your arm, if you are a person yet living in the dark ages when fingers were forks; for the race has not progressed so rapidly as the use of forks might have generated. You will say of this flower, 'It is fantastic; I do not understand it; I cannot make out the meaning or the language of this flower.' That is the bride for me—this is The Diana.

"How profoundly uninteresting are the mass of women!—how dull!—how commonplace!—Mediocrity! Think you I would mate with mediocrity—the mind of a cook or a housemaid in the trappings and harnessings of a duchess? Think you my bride shall cackle her '*toujours perdrix*' in my ear? Bah! I am talking to you, Diego, with ease, because the Alps are levelled. I'm a bad man, but I talk at ease.

"I must have excellent points in my bride. Take her hands and feet. The rosy colouring across the palm of Diana is like the inside of a shell which some old sea-god has kissed in sport beneath the waves. Each finger curls upward exquisitely. Her wrists are fine.

"Then her form. What outline! Her lips! Perugino might have painted them with some of his vermilion, but 'tis Nature's rich, rare red. The Duca di Cantilupe can discover all this at a glance; but then our unhappy Duca was born in Rome; and Rome is not London—eh, Diego? No wonder Englishwomen, as a rule, walk badly, and are graceless and stiff, or jerky and floppy, when they have no lessons in marble in every street and house to train their eyes.

"The Diana can so walk across a stretch of ugly pavement, that she turns the very stones into accessories. But I rave. I am an

ardent lover. Yes, I will give her one year to wear her bombazine—one year to wipe away her tears; and then I will pipe to her of *such love* as the old gods summoned their instruments to relate. I will show her how the Italians can love and hate with equal vehemence."

"Love the pieces, master," said Diego. "They will do you no harm. Love the pretty pieces, and make them your bride."

But Mr. Cantilupe waved Diego from his presence, and sat down to write.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MRS. BATTLE'S DISCRIMINATION.

"That which is added to the troubled past,
Is taken from the future, whose sad store
Grows less and less each day, till soon the last
Dull wave of woe shall break upon our shore."

"What is it that we seek? Enjoyment? We have cut the way short to it, and not gone tracking it through human ashes."

"I MUST see Father Venables."

It was thus Diana showed her return to everyday life. For weeks, after the realization of her loss, she had sat propped up by pillows in an armchair in her bedroom at Monklees, watching the clouds chasing one another, and taking no interest in her sur-

roundings. Mrs. Battle was sitting beside Diana's chair. She had displayed far greater tact and discernment than Job's comforters, never venturing to intermeddle with this grief, which seemed to her so awful and so unfathomable in its silence.

When her Joseph died—dear, dear, the condolences, the crape, the deep-edged paper, the choosing of the tombstone, the selection of an appropriate text, the call from the clergyman, the reading of the will, the pressing of refreshment upon her from kindly neighbours, the refusal of all refreshment, and the gradual giving way to their solicitations, the tear-shedding in common,—all this had been a very tonic to her, and kept her up, had been a description of excitement to her; for to uncultivated natures, however kindly, there is an awful excitement in death; the details of an illness are eagerly discussed,

and tears, sighs, excitement, and gossip are mixed up in a strange medley. Among the very poor this peculiarity of human nature is beheld in its most flagrant aspect.

Poor bedridden Martha Blossom was seen to jump from her couch to the window, exclaiming in a voice which had lost all its minor key, "There is a funeral, as I'm alive!"

'Tis only to the finely strung and highest caste that the Nemesis, with its attendant train of silent witnesses to sin, is awful, and the details appalling.

"Yes; I must see Father Venables," repeated Diana. "Mrs. Battle, I shall leave Monklees for London to-morrow."

Mrs. Battle wisely did not gainsay her; and, when the doctor said action of any sort was the best possible *cure* for Lady Panmure, she gladly made all the necessary preparations for their departure.

When Diana found herself once more in the little drawing-room at M—— Street, she gave way for the first time to a flood of tears. The tearlessness of her grief had made her seem unapproachable to Mrs. Battle; at this sign of naturalness, her kindly arms were about Diana, and words of ready sympathy flowing from her lips.

"You were his wife. Think, if he had gone to Ireland alone, and you had been carrying on your dramatic recitals as Miss Beauchamp, how far, far worse it would have been! Now you can have a mausoleum day; if you will, you can stand up before your dead, and meet the world's sympathy—your trouble is before the world.

"Dear heart, I'm not clever, but I can find out where comfort lurks. Believe me, there *is* comfort in this—the worst sorrows are those for which the world has some dis-

dain and some pity—sorrows which wisdom demands shall be fought out in silence, which shed tears in secret and smile before society. This you have escaped; you are Lady Panmure. You can carry on his noble work—you can make the name of Panmure glorious for its charity. Believe me, terrible as your trial is, it *is* gilded with some blessed days of comfort."

"*This* is how I will dedicate my life," said Diana, sobbing—"it shall be lived out in carrying on his work. My beloved Blaise will say I have fulfilled all his desires when we meet again. But, oh! if only I could find some clue to the——"

"Yes," interposed Mrs. Battle hastily, "I am always wondering what motive there could be, when Sir Blaise was so popular."

"All his tenants blessed him," said Diana, sobbing on Mrs. Battle's shoulder. "The Irish

are wonderfully warm-hearted and grateful when once they attach themselves."

"We shall never find out," said Mrs. Battle; "for this is only one instance among many; the wretches get off to America, or some remote country, and disguise themselves. Ireland is as bad as Russia—it's a conspiracy; only, I suppose, the Irish want a king and the Nihilists want to get rid of theirs. What would the Irish do with their king if they had one? Crown him with shamrocks, and feed him on potatoes? How would it be to hand over Ireland to one of our princes? The thought has just struck me."

But Diana made no reply. Her sorrow was green; no grass had grown over its grave. 'Tis when life begins to assert itself on its old lines, and outside talk begins to clang around you, that yet another blow is hammered on the faithful heart. To go on as if there is

nothing when for you the gladness of life is gone—when for you a very madness of recollection is strewn in every word and deed. No wonder grief is shrouded in a hundred forms, according to its intensity.

"Your sorrow is before the world," said Mrs. Battle, going back with wonderful tact to the solace Diana had not rejected. "The world applauds a faithful heart. Look at our Queen; but then, on the other hand, look at Prince Albert. I think ladies who marry again show some discontent with their first husbands. Meet with your ideal, and no second marriage is likely to accrue.

"Mrs. Dampy, I hear, is married to Mr. Wimple. She will live to regret the late Lieutenant more and more. When I was last in Leominster, Mr. Bovin told me that Mr. Wimple had been something dreadful over the settlements—insuring poor Mrs.

Dampy's life the day before the wedding, and dragging her about all over the place to do so. A bank broke, and some of poor Mrs. Dampy's eggs were lodged in it. Of course, she did not put all her eggs in one basket. Wise woman!—wise in most things, but *not* wise as regards Mr. Wimple. These underwriters are a very shrewd, hard-headed set of people, I believe.

"I heard all about Miss Masters, too, and Major Clintock. He is back again from Egypt; never, fortunately, having seen a shot fired. However, he joined in the festivities at Cairo; but that was like a schoolboy, who has done no work, munching plum-cake at the break-up feast with the best of them."

"I have not read Francisca's letter," said Diana. "Is she married yet?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Battle; "but there are

T. BILSON,

some who would rather have the memory of a perfect union, however short, than long years of that sort of thing."

Mrs. Battle's little efforts to cheer Diana were quite pathetic. She was straining after sentiments she had dimly grasped in Diana, and *now* this terrible sorrow, in which she, in as far as she could, shared, was quickening her intellect. "Even I can enter into this for you, and there never was a more unimaginative, every-day, practical person than myself."

Diana did not reply; her sorrow had reached another stage. The babble of a voice at her ear seemed to lull her. She had a past to live in, a future; to brave but the present moment was one of cessation from pain. The exhausted mind was stilled; the mental anguish was dulled. The bright shining of the wood fire, the glowing background of shadows, the delicate beauty of the half-disclosed

flowers which decorated the room, the faint fragrance they distilled,—all these things of sense and sound were creeping about their own department of her being, and appealing to their own portion of the strange combination of spirit, mind, and matter which forms our whole.

Beneath the window an organ struck up. Here was a direct link with past and present. The air was one of lazy grace ; the last time Diana had heard it, Blaise and she were sitting side by side at Monklees, and had discussed their mutual pleasure in the existence of organ-grinders.

"We will have one of these piano organs at Whitefriars, Di," Sir Blaise had said, "and you shall turn the handle ;" and then he had gone on to picture scenes which would knit them still nearer to each other—a very sacrament of recollection was entwined about the

tune, and now she must listen to its plaintive strains alone.

"Let me send the man away," said Mrs. Battle anxiously.

"No, no; give him this purse, and let him play on," said Diana; "he, too, must have many recollections mingling with those melodies to which his struggling existence is set. Keep me from selfishness, the worst product of grief."

CHAPTER XIX.

COUNSEL.

"Thou art amid the deathless; I still here amid things mortal in a land of graves."

"Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves:
Surely you must know who is here, is here;
You must know who I am, my love."

Father Venables had soon made his way to M—— Street; he had been horror-stricken at the terrible news of the murder of Sir Blaise, and felt deeply interested in Lady Panmure.

Why Father Venables had not become a 'Vert' was a question many people asked

themselves. He had been one of Cardinal M——'s most intimate friends. Yet he had remained in the Church of England, only carrying out a splendid service, which never, however, infringed the law.

He had an appearance which at once singled him out for the contemplative life. Sir Blaise had said he was like Fra Angelica's conceptions of "The Christ;" but most observers were startled by his extraordinary likeness to the supposed original portrait of our Saviour—the long hair, and eyes with their starry fixity, born of long vigils, the delicate profile — all were here.

When Father Venables had made the acquaintance of Sir Blaise, he had penetrated into his character; he had seen exactly where he stood in spiritual life,—full of energy, full of enthusiasm, ready to sacrifice himself and all that was his in

his devotion to the cause. The inward comment of Father Venables had been—*This* man must join me. No medium course will do for him—no medium course of a man of his form of mind is possible. And he had spoken to Sir Blaise something after this fashion :

"We inculcate a severe discipline—a watchful guard on the lips, and on the life. We preach the hidden life with Christ; and, above all, we preach humility in the service of God."

"I sometimes think I should find faith lost in sight if I join you," said Sir Blaise. "And surely to exercise faith it should essay its powers without props. Your perfectly conducted service will seem like a prop to me."

"This is the Puritan creed," said Father Venables, smiling. "The Puritans, in the

extremity of their zeal, would have robbed the flowers of their glory of hue and fragrance; birds of their gay plumage and wonderful songs; the sky of its shifting beauty of light and shade; and decked Nature, as they did human nature, in the grey garment of perpetual mourning. Does music charm you?"

"Yes," had said Sir Blaise; "my whole being responds to it; it uplifts me, and purifies my senses according as it is conceived in purity."

"You shall have music," answered Father Venables; "not only the organ, with its sublime breathings, but stringed instruments, all so sweetly modulated, that sometimes you may fancy that already the pearly gates have opened to receive you, and you are treading the streets of gold.

"Does symbolism teach you anything? does

it appeal to you? is there in its mysterious spirit-teaching something which touches the delicate fibres of your being, and makes you enter more fully into the deep sayings of Him who delighted to reveal His attributes by the approximation of symbols as His own insignia?

"You shall have symbols; every pillar of our churches shall be full of teaching; every nook and crevice shall have some hidden meaning; on our altars fresh flowers shall uplift themselves each day, and speak of Him who gloried in likening Himself to these fair creatures of His hand.

"The Church has more than doctrines to inculcate; her divine mission extends throughout every form and sacrament of life; she must refine and elevate, and give the tone to the manners of her members; she must soften rough ways, and, like the Kindly Light, lead on and up

by drawing the weapons of all fine arts and graceful accomplishments to herself, and turning them to her own use.

"The Church must truly mother her children, and bend a gracious and glad ear on the genius which now bursts forth in poesie or painting, or music or sculpture. She must teach her children to dedicate *all* their glorious gifts to her service; so shall she gather to herself more and more devoted lives, as we tread her happy courts, and feel the beneficence of her smile. I would press our modern painters into the service of our churches; I would say:

"'Go, beautify our walls; go, show your gratitude for the gift that has made you famous —to Him who has thus endowed you. Is your brush to make the canvas speak only for the world, and never for "the Christ?"'

"I would say to our modern sculptors: 'Go,

carve a pillar for us; go, build us a bell tower, which shall be the wonder of the world.'

"The Romish Church pressed all her gifted children into her service. *Why* should the English Church do less?"

"When the Christ comes, do you think He will look to His altars? will He not rather look to the hearts of his people?" had said Sir Blaise.

"Yes," answered Father Venables, a pale illumination making his face seem yet more unearthly in its spirituality; "yes, He will look to the hearts of His people; and He will look at all the works they have wrought for Him, and the delight and gladness they have shown in His service."

As he spoke, Sir Blaise had laid his hand on Father Venables's shoulder, and said, "Let me come under your influence, and be built up in this aspect of our faith."

Such was Father Venables, who was carrying on an extraordinary work in the East End, and was now about to be introduced into the life of Diana, under these altered circumstances.

He found her sitting on a tabouret close to the fire, her face buried in her hands; so lost in thought that she neither heard him announced, nor was conscious of his presence till he spoke.

"Lady Panmure."

Something in the modulated yet penetrating tone of his voice touched a new spring in Diana. She felt as if the bearer of a message from her own Blaise had come to her. This man had exercised a powerful influence over him; he doubtless would also over her.

Rising, she looked at him through a mist of tears, and said simply, "You have come to teach me *how* to bear my grief. You will

show me how it can be made bearable to me."

And, sitting down beside her, Father Venables brought more comfort and sweetness to her soul than she had experienced since her sorrow.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT NOW?

"There is the power of complexions, obviously modifying the dispositions and sentiments."

Mr. Cantilupe, who vigilantly watched the movements of Diana, was soon in possession of the turn events had taken in her life. Father Venables was constantly with her, giving her his counsel, and helping her to bear her sorrow, in as far as one human being can help another.

Whether or no he should call and offer his condolences at the present moment, was the question he was constantly revolving. At last he decided to call, and the *rôle* he would

play was so perfectly sketched in his mind, that he had but the impromptu filling in, and this to a man of his intrigue was no difficult matter. He was not likely to falter and break down in a love-game which was so nearly played out.

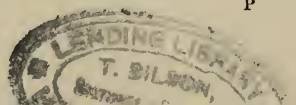
"I could not bear to witness your grief," he said, as he gently clasped Diana's hand, on his first interview. "But, believe me, I have lived in your sorrow, though I have made no sign. I have been in daily communication with you by those subtle means which despise the bonds our bodies would hold us in. Sir Blaise, from the moment I saw him, exercised a fascination over me. I was ready to sacrifice myself for him, the moment I saw how far happier you would be with him than in carrying on your dramatic recitals. And the sacrifice cut deeper. Ah, Lady Panmure, all great love is unselfish! If I have been unselfish,

you have taught me to be so. All I ask of you is this, let me come and share in your sorrow; let me come and talk of Sir Blaise."

Then he sat down beside Lady Panmure, unutterable dejection in his attitude; he went on to explain how he had hurried from the Western Highlands at the news of Diana's trouble, merely to be *near* her.

Diana felt it to be a terrible strain to sit and listen to Mr. Cantilupe now. She had lived her life since they had last met—for we cannot count out the living of our life by years, but by events; still gratitude prevented her showing any touch of weariness, for she believed him to be sincere in his admiration of Sir Blaise; and certainly he had shown much generosity of sentiment regarding herself—and grand traits much impressed Diana.

"I shall carry on my husband's work at Whitefriars," she said. "The village homes



will be completed shortly, and Father Venables has a friend who will be my private chaplain. My time is all marked out now."

"Great sorrows," said Mr. Cantilupe meditatively, "always take one of two effects—drive people *into* or *from* the world. On a nature such as yours, the latter result would of course accrue. The devotional life has always had attractions for me."

Mrs. Battle, who was never absent when Mr. Cantilupe was present, at this drew her white knitted shawl more closely about her shoulders, and shivered.

"If I am a sinner, I might have been a saint," he said, smiling at this expression of Mrs. Battle's sentiments. "The greatest sinners *have* made the greatest saints. Shall I prove it?"

Again Mrs. Battle shivered. Was this man about to appear as an angel of light next, and still twine himself about the life of Lady

Panmure? At that moment she felt herself prepared to accept any theory about the emissaries of the Evil One garbing themselves as human beings, and walking about the earth. She would have grasped the German theory of vampires. She would have listened to any doctrine, however extravagant.

And yet she could prove nothing against him, as he sate there with his singular appearance and unruffled calm; only, if it were a matter of evidence, she could prove things in his favour. Yet, *does* instinct go for *nothing? Why* should not instinct be as faithful in its teaching as any other of those subtle guides, which whisper of immortality, and quicken our spiritual apprehensions?

"Clever people can prove anything, Mr. Cantilupe," she said slowly; "even their own goodness."

A slight smile hovered about Mr. Cantilupe's lips, the curves of which were just visible beneath his iron-grey moustache. He had found some amusement in Mrs. Battle's dislike to himself.

"I can enter into the spirit of those men and women who, sickened with life, fled into monasteries and nunneries, and passed their days in preparation for death: the highest natures are sometimes tempted to such extravagances now."

Mr. Cantilupe was watching Diana; this mood would fit hers.

"I have a friend, Lady Panmure," he continued, "my most intimate friend—a priest—who, in the midst of a brilliant career, suddenly threw up all earthly prospects to lead a monk's life; he is my father confessor. It was in the middle of the revels at a masquerade ball in Rome that a sense of the deeper significance, indicated by the dress of the

masqueraders, swept across him. He declares he had a vision; whether it was really so, who can say? People are sceptical about this vision; anyhow, the whole course of his life was altered. He joined the Jesuit Fathers, an order I esteem highly."

"Are they not unscrupulous men?" said Mrs. Battle. "I know I fear them."

"Their motto, 'The end justifies the means,' may sound alarming, Mrs. Battle; but do not some ends justify the means? Your English Church has been built upon the 'stake'; your English Constitution bought at the price of a series of blood-shedding rebellions. Have the ends justified the means? Perfection is only attained at awful sacrifices in the world of Art and Nature, and human nature——"

"What was the vision of your friend?" said Diana.

Mr. Cantilupe drew his chair an inch nearer to the couch on which Lady Panmure was half reclining, and said—"It was a vision of self-sacrifice; I have learnt something of this."

Diana made no answer; she wished Mr. Cantilupe would go away. Perhaps he saw the desire in her half-closed eyes, for rising, he said—"You are not strong. Mrs. Battle will take great care of you; she must not allow you to be reckless of yourself. I think, as an old friend, I have a right to beg her to do so."

Mrs. Battle made no reply; she was too angry for speech; and Diana, thinking again of his generosity, murmured—"You are always so kind!"

And with this consolation Mr. Cantilupe left; but after the door had closed behind him, Diana gave way to a paroxysm of tears.

Should she *ever* overcome her weariness of life ? Should she ever feel as if it was yet sweet to breathe the breath of life ?

To have sunned herself in a love so perfect as that of Sir Blaise's ; to have found in him a combination so extraordinary—that in the love he had bestowed upon her, *all* elements seemed to be combined ; and then to be robbed in one fell moment of her joy by the hand of an assassin !

How could she ever again find any interest in the things which had once interested her ? Every intellectual aspiration, every response, even to the voices of Nature, had died within her.

CHAPTER XXI.

INFANT VOICES.

"O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields.
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more."

WALT WHITMAN.

THE crowning joy of a love marriage should consist, surely, in the delight with which a mother finds that the child has the stamp of his father's individuality. Diana, as she had hung over the cradle of the infant Blaise—God's best gift to her—was never weary of discovering some fresh expression in those baby features which foreshadowed that the father would live in the son.

Five years have passed since this precious

child had been placed in Diana's outstretched arms; and in the clinging of those baby hands about her neck, the life which had died down in her had commenced to pulse once more. She *must* smile for baby's sake. She *must* forget herself in his dependence on her.

In the library at Whitefriars, in the deep window-sill, Diana is sitting; and the little Blaise is as usual by her side, with his small dimpled hand thrust into hers. He is talking of his father. Diana and he are always so talking. His long, dark, curly hair is streaming down his shoulders; for Diana cannot make up her mind to have it cut yet.

"I am like papa," he is saying; and his words are as perfectly pronounced as if he had long been an inhabitant of these regions. But Diana had never talked to him with any difference of tone or accent, as most people do when addressing children.

"In Leominster, to-day, mammy, a lady stopped Mrs. Battle, and she said, 'The boy "features" his father.' What did she mean?"

Diana smiled, and said, "That was Mrs. Bovin's remark." Then Diana kissed his little upturned face, and said, "Meant, darling, that you are like papa; and so you are."

"I want to see papa, mammy. Shall I see him soon? Can't we go up in the clouds to him now? Do you think, if we prayed, God would send an angel to take us?"

"Perhaps God wants to keep us here, Blaisie darling, for a little time; so that you may grow up to be a man, and do all papa left you to do."

"I will be a good boy, mammy. I will be a great man. I will read all these books. Shall I be a great man then?" He had jumped down from his seat in the window-sill, and was sweeping his baby hands along some of the lower

shelves, crammed with books. "I can spell out long words now."

"You can. You are mammy's own boy," said Diana proudly.

"Then when I have read all these" (he clasped his little arms as if to embrace all those mighty works), "then I will go and fight for you and the Queen. Yes, I will fight" — and now he doubled up his fists, and threw himself into attitude—"I will fight every Frenchman and German I come across."

"Why, Blaise, you wanted to go up in the clouds a minute ago; and if you are going to fight everybody, you won't be fit to be where there is no fighting."

"Mammy, sometimes I want to fight, and sometimes to pray. I *feels* so naughty and so good." The only baby trick the little Blaise had in talking, was the adding on of an "s," and Diana had vainly tried to correct this peculiarity.

Some Frenchman, looking at the child, had said, in Diana's hearing, "*Très diable ou très ange.*"

"I don't care for toys," he went on, his upper lip curling in scorn; "bits of glass Joss Clintock plays with, and cries if he can't hit one marble against another. Give me books; don't give me marbles."

"I wish you would play at marbles, and be more like other boys," said Diana, passing her fingers through his long curls. "I keep you as much a baby as I can. I think you are too much with mammy, though."

But at this, the proud sensitive lips of the child trembled, and the next minute he was sobbing passionately, as he flung his arms round his mother's neck, and cried out,

"Oh! keep me near you always. Never leave me, mammy; I will play marbles with Joss. I *will*, indeed I will. I'll be like other boys."

And it was long before Diana could pacify

him, and bring him back to his defiant desire to fight everybody and everything for herself and the Queen.

Many changes have taken place at Whitefriars; the village homes are complete and in happy working order. Diana visits each cottage once a week, and the children veritably kiss her shadow as she moves amongst them. In the chapel stands the tomb of Sir Blaise. A life-size figure in marble surmounts it, and the morning and evening sun streams down each day on Diana's kneeling figure, as she joins in the glorious services of our Church at matins and evensong.

Two years after the death of Sir Blaise, Mr. Cantilupe had played the last bar of his love-song. He had thrown himself at the feet of Diana, and had entreated her to become his wife. He had spared not an argument; he had thrown off every disguise in which,

before her, he had hitherto cloaked his love. He had shown her how it is possible to conceive a great passion, and to carry it on for years against frightful odds; but he had not added, smiting down every impediment in his way—he had some reserve on this point. Mrs. Battle had been an unwilling listener to that interview.

On a bleak November night, when Diana and she were sitting in the drawing-room at Whitefriars, Mr. Cantilupe had been announced, and Mrs. Battle, for *once* desiring to escape from the presence of which she had now lost all fear, had made a frantic rush to the *portiers* which draped a door usually left open, but to her infinite vexation she now found locked; so behind the curtains she had to remain, ashamed to come out and confess the failure of her attempt.

It would be as well to narrate *her* description

of that interview, during a confidential chat with Mrs. Bovin, over one of the hereditary tea-cakes, which seemed to have a happy facility for letting loose the tongue of all Mrs. Bovin's circle. Mrs. Bovin had suggested the probability of Lady Panmure marrying again.

"'Mr. Bovin says she is more charming than ever,' she said. But a rent-roll such as hers would make anybody charming. Not but what you will remember my remark of long ago—as to her being a very taking young lady. But money—money is the great god with most men. [Here Mrs. Bovin's long "crow" came in with admirable effect.]

"I don't hesitate to say Mr. Bovin had an eye to my thousands when he married me. I *don't* blame him, Mrs. Battle. A lady without money has ofttimes a hard life with her

husband. She has no commercial value in his eyes. And a husband can make you feel it when his temper gets up. Thanks to my modest income—which is laid out to great advantage; no two or three per cents. for Mr. Bovin — I have seen nothing of the temper *said* to exist, and the existence of which I *don't* deny—I have seen nothing of his temper."

"Apprehension is nearly as bad as realization," said Mrs. Battle, shaking her head.

"Maybe," said Mrs. Bovin. "I *don't* draw my own cheques. This I consider rather hard. But Mr. Bovin says he has sunk my funds in landed property. I have not seen the landed property, but it's unbecoming in us wives to be too curious. We must give the men the strings, and let them drive. I know my place, and keep it.

"The other day Mr. Bovin hinted the

Chatham and Dover were about to run a line of railway in the direction of this property, and he said, 'If we sell it, I need hardly say you shall feel the benefit.' When a husband says so much, he is an excellent, worthy man."

Another cup of tea had by this time been poured out for each lady, and Mrs. Bovin repeated her query, "Will Lady Panmure marry again?"

"No," said Mrs. Battle. "She is rare—she is faithful; she will *not* marry again."

"The reason for my asking," said Mrs. Bovin, now placing her teacup on the small table at her side, and clasping her capable-looking hands in front of her, "is this. Mr. Cantilupe has been in the neighbourhood. Mr. Bovin went to London in the same train a few days ago, and, to use his own words, which I prefer employing to my own, 'The charlatan looked distracted.'"

Then Mrs. Battle sipped her tea, smiling; and looked out of the window, still smiling, and finally burst out—

"Talk of love, Mrs. Bovin! I was the unwilling witness of his mad attachment to Lady Panmure. If I look pale to-day, 'tis no wonder; for the last two nights I have been unable to sleep. I thought of Mr. Battle's calm ways when he offered to me; but I see now men are various in every way. Calm!—he *was* calm. Cool!—he *was* cool. He said off his proposal like a verse of poetry. Never faltered once—not once."

Then she went on to describe her capture between the curtains; and made Mrs. Bovin laugh till the tears streamed from her eyes.

"I dreaded that man," Mrs. Battle had continued, "till I found he had no hold on Lady Panmure; when the intellectual spell was broken, I ceased to fear. He threw

himself at her feet, and *this* time he was *not* acting; he appealed to her intellect; he appealed to her gratitude. The passion in him made the passion of the wind and the rain outside as nothing."

"Good gracious! Mrs. Battle," said Mrs. Bovin suddenly, "do you think he had anything to do with the murder of Sir Blaise?"

"Why, no," said Mrs. Battle, whitening; "serpent as he is, I don't think he is so bad as that. These murders in Ireland are not the work of one or two, but of a community, I take it. If Lady Panmure thought this, it would kill her."

"Never breathe it then," said Mrs. Bovin; "but it has flashed across me."

"You know the opinion I have always entertained of Mr. Cantilupe, and yet I never thought of this," said Mrs. Battle.

"It is dangerous even to suggest it," said Mrs. Bovin; "as a lawyer's wife, I know this. Do let the idea escape you as quickly as possible. Have another cup of tea."

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Battle, "you have frightened me. I always said he would work Lady Panmure some harm, but I never thought of *this*, especially when he was so amiable over her wedding—even gave her away; and his presents on the occasion were magnificent."

"Lawyers would call that a bad sign," said Mrs. Bovin; "the quiet people are always the most dangerous; but take my advice, and never mention the subject to Lady Panmure."

"When Mr. Cantilupe left her on that evening, he said he should go to Italy," said Mrs Battle. "I wonder has he done so? He confessed he was the Duca di Cantilupe,

and of the same family as Hortense di Cantilupe, whom Sir Blaise thought so like Lady Panmure. When Mr. Cantilupe mentioned this Hortense, Lady Panmure began to cry; and then, do you know, the evil spirit seemed cast out of him, for he gave up his wild speeches and wilder gesticulations; and, peeping behind the curtains, I saw him stand and look at her as some one might look for the last time on the 'destiny' of their lives, and he said—

"'*Forgive me!*'

"Then he caught her hand, and pressed it to his lips, and was gone. He loved her; I must own he loved her. It was a description of love, Mrs. Bovin, that people like you and me can't quite understand. We see something strange, but we don't know what it means; anyhow, I've learnt this, love is various. Mr. Cantilupe, or the Duca (which

even we may call him), was as deep as those ancients he was always quoting; deep every way—in love and in the details of life."

Mrs. Bovin nodded. She hardly cared to be linked with Mrs. Battle with regard to *the understanding;* but they were *dear* friends; and, of course, there was a mystery encompassing some people which it was not easy even for a lawyer's wife to decipher.

"That night," continued Mrs. Battle, "Lady Panmure never retired to rest. I know she did not; for, after repeatedly going to her door, and listening, I at last went in, and I found her kneeling on her *prie-dieu*, looking as white as the lily in that vase.

"There was no rest that night for Lady Panmure. She said the wind moaned so in the trees, and that sometimes she felt frightened at life, it was full of such masked people, and there was in everybody such a

frightful power for good and evil; and then she added, 'I wish I had never seen Mr. Cantilupe; he is so subtle, and so strange.' We have never seen him since."

"Come, come," said Mrs. Bovin jocularly, "you look quite low. I must make you laugh. I've a piece of news for you. Guess!"

"A marriage, I suppose," said Mrs. Battle, twinkling. "Is it the doctor?"

"The doctor, no," said Mrs. Bovin. "The wonder is doctors ever do marry. They see the frail side of the body, and the clergy the frail side of the spirit. It's enough to dispirit both parties; but you are not so far distant. What do you say to Miss Edwards?"

"Oh, my good gracious!" said Mrs. Battle.

"Yes, and stop a bit. Who do you think to? In with the county will she be at last; she was

always a kite-flier. What would you say to Squire Musgrave?"

"Oh, my good gracious!" again reiterated Mrs. Battle.

"It came about in the oddest way in the world. I believe Miss Edwards got hold of the right derivation of some word at a luncheon party, and Squire Musgrave said, 'That's the woman for me; she will find out the derivation of everything that puzzles me, for I get more foggy every day of my life.' He has a sense of humour, has the Squire. He asked her the derivation of the verb *to love*, and out she came with a long string of Greek and Latin, and goodness knows what; and the Squire found such sport in her old-fashioned ways, that he asked her to head his table."

This time, Mrs. Battle went back to her favourite surprise valve, "Dear, dear!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DUCA DI CANTILUPE.

"These particular griefs and crimes are the foliage and fruit of such trees as we see growing."

"Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men."

"Yes, we may pause in sorrow and silence over the depths of darkness that are in man, if we rejoice in the heights of purer vision he has attained to such things were and are in man, in all men, in us too."

In a monastery, a few leagues from Rome, lay a man dying: that man was the Duca di Cantilupe! It was the eve of the New Year, and before it had entered he would have passed away.

Diego was standing at the head of the

small wooden bedstead on which he was reclining, and several monks were gathered at the foot.

For one year the Duca had lived in their midst as a guest, promising to join their Order at the expiration of the year. Of his past life he had never spoken, and they had asked him no question; but now, in the face of his departure, he expressed a desire to make a confession.

One of the brothers advanced and held a crucifix to his lips. After kissing it, he raised himself with an effort, and in a low voice commenced to speak:

"Only to such as you would I make my confession. I would ask no mercy from the world; I know it too well to crave its pity. From my entrance into life, I may say I despised the race to which I belonged. As a boy, looking up at the stars, I wondered

whether the inhabitants were nobler and better than the inhabitants of the world in which I found my lot cast. I looked out on the shifting phantasmagoria in which I was to play my part, and decided that the race I so profoundly despised should be my tools and playthings; I would trade on their weaknesses, and make the money I needed out of their foibles.

"I consulted the mirror, and found the person it reflected would aid me in my life *rôle.*

"I put myself through a rigorous course of learning—I knew that knowledge was power.

"I set up a secret society, to ferret out by constant watching and various intrigues the private histories of individuals who held leading positions in the capitals of Europe. I found the means of introducing myself to their

presence; and, by hints and innuendoes, managed to get all I required from them. I gained an ascendency through fear. I pretended to have a prophetic eye. My country-people thought I had the evil eye, and they would shoot out their fingers behind their backs when I passed—after the manner of our race. I discovered for myself that my glance was singular in its effect on people; I used it, by the study of mesmerism.

"I added music to my accomplishments. 'A man who plays so divinely must be good,' said some.

"I was a welcome guest at many houses by this means alone. I made my fingers, as they pressed the keys, tell out life's tale—now in the mad frolic of unlicensed passion, and now in the wailing dirge of the penitent.

"'Your fingers are bewitched,' some said; and I let them think so. If to be sold over to

the Evil One is to be bewitched, then, indeed, I was bewitched.

"Yet, can you believe me, I had yearnings after better things. I had the makings of a saint within me, for all this. I had a restless craving after perfection; I surrounded myself with the rare, the curious, the beautiful. Sometimes, in our churches, the figure of the Christ stretched out on the Cross appealed strangely to me; and I thought, could I reverence the race through this dying Saviour? But these were my better moments.

"Then the love of women came to me unsought. They found something singular in me. I traded on their love; I used them as pitilessly as I used every person and thing that came in my way, tossing them from me when wearied, as you would a scentless flower. I thought I *could* not love; I knew too much about women — false and selfish, stupid and

uninteresting. I was callous to their charms. I thought I could see farther than most, only to use it to my own advancement.

"I grew rich. I could have retired from my *rôle;* but this game had become interesting. To play the mystic was second nature. Besides, human foibles had made me rich, and now I could use them as playthings. I could add to my curious collection each day. This human race, to which I had the honour to belong, with its unctuous smiles for the prosperous, and its pitiless frowns for the poor; with its cold stare for those a rung lower on the social ladder, and its winning smile for those a step higher—how I despised it, as I bowed to it, smiled at it, and traded on it by turn!

"Then was brought to my notice a beautiful and gifted girl, for whom at once I felt a subtle sympathy and an intoxicating love.

"*I,* who am dying, yet feel as I think of

her the same strange longing for her presence near me; even this grim foe which is beckoning me hence, this masterful Death, cannot quench the deep passion I entertain for her.

"Most men are iron to-day, brass to-morrow, some other metal next day, but I—— Like steel was my love, and like a man in steel did I fight through a deadly sin to win her.

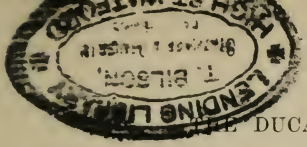
"I could not sacrifice myself for her. I could not see her Panmure's wife and breathe the air of life.

"I felt within me the impulse of a wounded tiger; I felt—O God!—that he must be got out of the way. I watched, I waited, I was remorseless as—eh! as Death itself. I felt that if he were out of the way, I might win some sort of love from her—some attenuated spectral love if you will — some mild intel-

lectual appreciation, which would link her to me. But I have anticipated the sequel.

"I wooed her; she, for long, did not perceive my drift. I disguised (as it has ever been easy for me to disguise) my real sentiments. I masked my passion; I had but one enemy, and that was Mrs. Battle; simple soul, she yet found me out; she—with her clumsy apprehensions of all that is subtle—*she* discovered my passion; and she, I know, constantly warned Miss Beauchamp against me.

"I wooed her. At last The Diana saw what I meant; she could not bear her ambition to be thwarted. She is not *faultless*, yet she is *peerless;* she blinded herself as best she could, and rushed on to win her goal. And I, finding I could gain no hold on her except the hold of gratitude—let it be so—and set to work to raise, if I could, a mountain of gratitude upon which to build up my unquenchable



desire to win her yet. I, who had used the race before, must now be used in my turn. I wooed her; but it was of no avail,—she married Panmure.

"And now, draw nearer, for all my other sins—sins I have no time so much as to sketch—seem as nothing in comparison with the evil I did her. Tell me—to *instigate*, to *whisper*, to *incite*—is that as bad as murder? Does that make a man guilty?"

The shadowy hands of the Duca were thrust forward towards the monks as if to catch their answer.

"According to the law of Jesu, it is as bad," said the monk who held the crucifix—advancing and again pressing it to the lips of the dying man.

The Duca lent back, and groaned.

"I am guilty, then. The death of Panmure must be laid at my door. I caused a whisper

against him amongst his tenantry. *I did no more.* Who shot him, I know not. The whisper was insidiously dropped; little by little I had their minds poisoned against him —so that in the state of the country it was like throwing down a match. Diego, here, was the agent I employed, and he did his work well."

"You paid me for it, master. I am ready to do anything for the *scudi*."

"The law could not deal with you, Duca," said one of the monks, who had been a notary before he had joined the brotherhood. "The world is full of whisperers and instigators, and they go unpunished. The matter rests with your conscience, and with the Blessed Virgin. She will plead for you with the Holy Jesu, and we will pray for the rest of your soul."

"Would Lady Panmure forgive me if she knew?" said the dying man.

"If she loves the Holy Jesu, yes," said the monk who held the crucifix.

"She is devout, now," said the Duca. "She spends hours kneeling in the chapel where Sir Blaise is laid."

"Take comfort, then, she will forgive you; and as she is at peace concerning her husband, I would not let her mind be disturbed with communications which can only cause the buried past to rise again."

The Duca sighed as if relieved, and whispered, "Pray for me."

Kneeling round the bed, the monks commenced a monotonous chant, which now mingled with the tolling of distant bells, and now floated out and onwards, breaking the still air with the fervour of their souls, as they sang of the healing virtues of the Holy Cross.

Meantime the Duca lay in an apparent state of unconsciousness.

* * * *

It was not till the great bell of the chapel swung out an imperious call to Mass, that the monks rose from their knees, and, bending over him, whispered to one another—"He is dead!"

THE END.

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"GIN A BODY MEET A BODY,"

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